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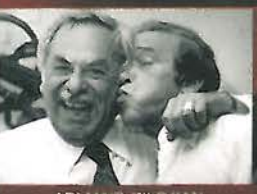

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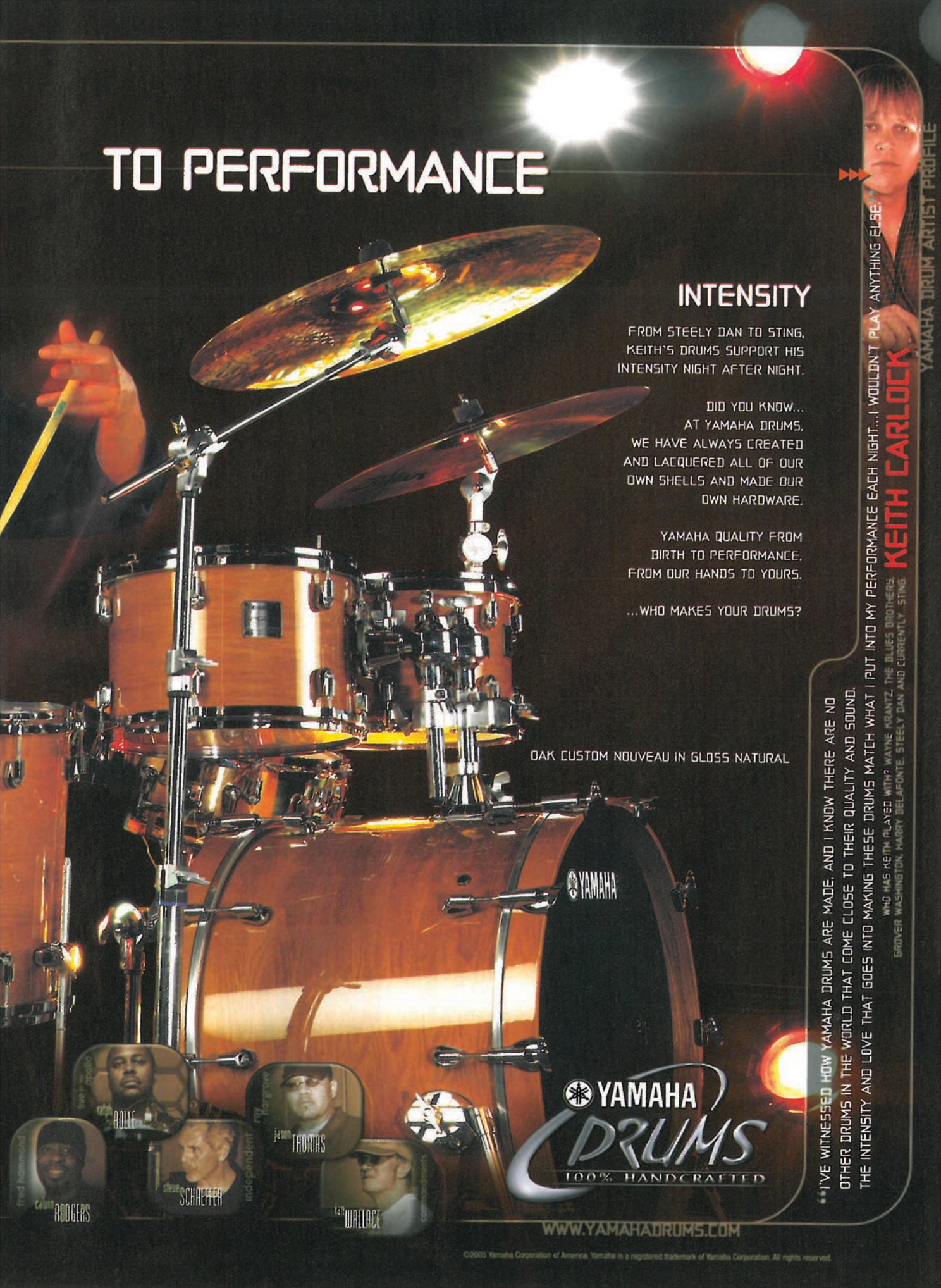
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Leaps And Bounds

Things are really jumping here at *Modern Drummer*. In recent months we've seen the number of subscribers go up. (New readers: Welcome aboard!) The number of newsstand and other outlets carrying the magazine has gone *way* up. (You can find *MD* in practically every music store and book store nationwide, and just recently several major drug store chains as well as other retail outlets have picked us up.) And finally, advertising support continues to be very strong. All I can say is, we here at *MD* are *very* grateful.

The issue you're holding in your hands is proof of just how much things are growing. We've *packed* it with solid drumming info. Besides feature stories on some very happening players from a wide variety of styles, we've assembled an all-star column roster: **Chris Vrenna**, **Joel Rosenblatt**, **Robby Ameen**, **Rod Morgenstein**, **Richie Morales**, and **Rodney Green** have written some great pieces for this issue. And we're also excited to welcome back legendary Tower Of Power drummer **David Garibaldi** as a regular columnist.

Of course, putting together all of this editorial has increased our workload. Thankfully, we recently added a new editor to our ranks. I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome **Mike Dawson** to our editorial staff. Mike is a recent graduate of the University Of The Arts in Philadelphia, where he earned his master's degree in jazz studies. Besides being a fine player, Mike is also a very talented writer. We feel fortunate to have him with us.

In other exciting news, we're proud to announce the release of our latest book, **John Riley**'s *The Jazz Drummer's Workshop*. As you probably know, John is a world-class drummer and educator. He's also been an *MD* columnist for many years. In fact, *The Jazz Drummer's Workshop* is a collection of John's finest articles. Conceptual topics, artist style & analysis, and technique pieces are all presented.

Adding to the educational value of the book is a CD of Riley performing over sixty examples. I was fortunate to be in the studio while John was recording, and it was amazing to see him read down some incredibly challenging exercises, all with a beautiful touch and while swinging like crazy. Very inspiring! For more information on *The Jazz Drummer's Workshop*, please check out the ad on page 179.

Hope you enjoy this issue!

Bill Miller

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Louie Bellson

Editor's note: MD's December '04 tribute to Louie Bellson generated tremendous reader response. Much of that response didn't pertain to the tribute itself. Rather, it seemed as if everybody had a "Louie Bellson story" of their own to share, illustrating the personal impact that Louie has had on so many drummers at every level. Here are some representative examples.

I was very happy to read your tribute to Louie Bellson. Thirty years ago, I had the great fortune to get his help. I was about to play a session involving a very difficult chart, so I went to Pro Drum Shop in Hollywood to ask Bob Yeager (the owner) for some help. Who should walk in but Buddy Rich. (Wow!) Bob said, "Hey, Buddy.... Take the kid in the back and help him with this." So we went into a room, where Buddy sat down, and, with a smile on his face, played the chart three times as fast as I was going to have to play it. Then he said, "That's it. Nothing to it!"

When I returned to Bob after my "lesson" with Mr. Rich, Bob said, "You couldn't have learned it *that* fast." At that moment, in walked Louie Bellson. (Wow again!) Bob said, "Hey, Louie.... Take the kid in the back and help him with this."

This wonderful gentleman said, "Hi, I'm Louie. What's your name?" "Bill," I replied, and then into the back we went. Louie proceeded to go over that chart with me, note for note. By the time we were done I felt so damn good about it—and about my playing—that I did a great job the next day. I went on playing professionally for the next twenty years.

God bless Louie Bellson. And thanks again for the terrific article on him. **Bill Karp**

When I was nineteen, I went to a small convention for aspiring drummers in Chicago. Louie Bellson, David Garibaldi, and Dom Famularo were the panelists giving us advice. The whole weekend was intense and memorable. At the end, Louie was inspired to write a poem called "Why Can't We," which he dedicated both to the young attendees of the conference and to his recently departed wife, Pearl Bailey. Louie read the poem to us, and, moved with emotion, his voice broke at the end. It's the only time in my life I've been in a room with thirty grown men weeping together. (I still have that poem, on a piece of hotel stationery.)

Later, on the bus to the airport, Louie greeted me with a kind smile. I had given him a copy of my first "drum book"—which, in retrospect, was just a little collection of notes I was giving to my students. Louie had kept it for a day or so. On the bus he handed the book back to me—with a big note on the front that read, "Great book, Joe"—and told me how much he liked it. It was probably one of a thousand kind acts Louie performed over the years, but he can never know what it meant to me. (I still have that book, too.)

Louie Bellson is one of my heroes, not only because he's a great drummer, but because no one better personifies the word "gentleman." Thanks for doing a tribute to him while he is still with us. **Joe Bergamini**

I just got home after twelve hours in the studio, and saw the new *MD* tribute to Louie. I was exhausted, but I couldn't put it down! As I have mentioned before in *MD*, Louie was the first influence in my drumming life. "Skin Deep" created the light in my heart and mind that inspired me at the age of eight. Louie was so far ahead of his time that it's hard to imagine his level of musical genius.

Several years ago, at the Grammy Awards, Louie sat down beside me for dinner before we played the show with our respective artists. I was so shaken to have him sitting beside me that I couldn't eat. He was incredibly kind and genuine to a "nobody" sitting there stunned at his presence.

Thank you for printing Louie's favorite musical selections. I will have them all ASAP. And *please* thank him for his hard work, genius, spirit, and inspiration to all of us who are smitten with drums. No words seem strong enough for our appreciation.

Thank you, Louie, and God bless you.

Paul Leim

Condolences To Vinnie Paul

As we went to press with this issue we learned of the senseless shooting of Dimebag Darrell, guitarist for Damageplan and brother of drummer Vinnie Paul, along with three other victims at a club in Columbus, Ohio. *Modern Drummer* offers our condolences to Vinnie on this tragic loss. Reader comments will appear in the April *Readers' Platform*.

Chris Pennie

In your December feature on Chris Pennie of Dillinger Escape Plan, Chris incorrectly credited a drummer on his "favorite recordings" list. He cited Chris Vrenna as the drummer on Nine Inch Nails' *Fragile*. Vrenna hasn't been with NIN for years. Jerome Dillon was the studio and live drummer at that time, and still is. Jerome is one of the most underrated drummers around, and he deserves much more credit. Check out the NIN live DVD to see how creative and tight he is. **Zach Friedman**

Hossam Ramzy

Many thanks for the interview with Hossam Ramzy in your November issue. Mr. Ramzy is my favorite drummer, and it was a thrill to see him so fully represented in *Modern Drummer*. David Licht did a wonderful job with the interview, presenting an insightful view of both the person and the brilliant musician that is Hossam Ramzy. Please keep up the good work that makes your publication such a joy to read. **Eric Peterson**

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Lori Peters

Regarding the *Update* article on Lori Peters of Skillet: Amen, sister! I was a die-hard drum corps fan and band geek in high school. At first, most of the band directors tried to get me to switch to French horn or some other more "ladylike" instrument. I had to challenge every guy on the drumline to get to first chair. I played bass drum, tri-toms, snare, and quads over my four-year marching career. I highly encourage anyone, male or female: If you wish to play the drums, then so be it. Bang away! **Kat Almlie**

Critique Pro...

Allow me to voice my appreciation for one of the reviews in your November '04 *Critique*. I am referring to your mention of Tye Tribbett & GA's debut album, *Life*. I've grown up listening to Gospel music. Much of my inspiration and influence has come from usually unknown groove giants like Marvin McQuitty, Calvin Rogers, Robert "Spud" Seawright, Joel Smith, and George "Spanky" McCurdy. I love it when any of them gets the mention they so richly deserve.

Lately, I've seen more and more of these guys make it to the mainstream—such as Gerald Heyward with Beyoncé and Mary J. Blige, and Nisan Stewart with Missy Elliot, Aaliyah, and Angie Stone. Thanks for remembering these guys in recent issues and for continuing to highlight musicianship at its highest level. **Rick Marquez**

...And Con

Michael Parillo's review of Megadeth's *The System Has Failed* in your November *Critique* was unjust and inaccurate. I can understand that someone may not like Megadeth's music. But I can't understand how anyone could rate the album so poorly. I believe that Vinnie Colaiuta adds a flair to metal music that no other drummer adds. And I can't understand how *MD*'s reviewer would classify the music as "uninteresting" and "standard" when every other review says that the album is one of the best that Megadeth has released in the past ten years. **Roger Gallant**

A Lesson From A Student

Throughout his life, Nick Delise worked in many fields. But he always *played* the drums. At the age of fifty-nine, after reading *MD*'s December '03 article about me, Nick contacted me for lessons. Every time I saw him, he truly burst with an unbridled enthusiasm and excitement for the drums, for drummers, and for music. His love, energy, attitude, and passion for my own chosen field was a continual reminder of why I chose it to begin with.

Nick was my student for approximately one year. Teaching him was a joyful experience, and what I learned from him helped me stay connected to the joy of music in a business that can sometimes be joyless.

With great sadness I recently learned that Nick passed away, and was buried with his drumsticks. He will remain one of my favorite drummers and students. **Sherrie Maricle**
The DIVA Jazz Orchestra

Dropped Beat

The caption on the photo of the Pearl Export set shown on page 91 of the December issue states that the kit comes with a 16x22 bass drum. It actually comes with an 18x22 bass drum.

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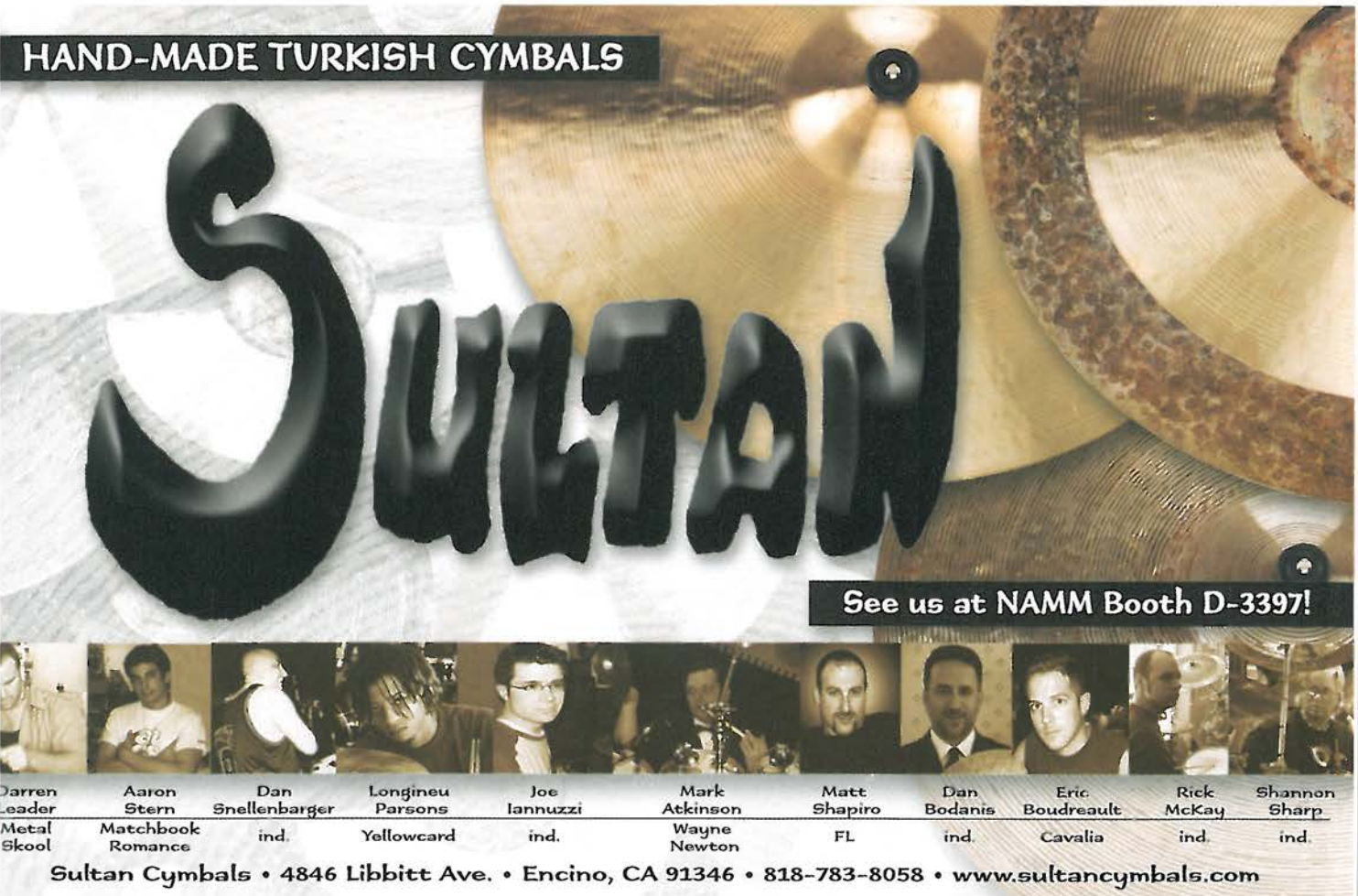

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Developing A Weak Bass Drum Foot

My left foot is naturally weaker than my right, which poses a problem for double bass playing. Would it be good to tighten the tension on my left pedal to compensate for this weakness? Or should I let my left foot gradually catch up through isolated left-side practice?

Dave Kingsland

We've always believed that it's best to keep your pedals adjusted as closely as possible for the same tension and overall feel. Then work on developing your foot technique to where both feet have the same capabilities.

Isolated practice with the left foot is one way to improve its speed and power. (Just don't forget to also work on the coordination and timing of both your feet together.) Some double bass drummers recommend practicing with a jogger's ankle weight and/or a small weight of some kind secured to the top of the foot itself. (Be creative.) This follows the same theory as practicing with heavier sticks than you normally play with.

Controlling Drumhead Ring

I recently stepped up to a Tama Starclassic Performer Birch kit. Nice kit and great hardware, but the drums seem impossible to control. I've tried Aquarian Performance II and Double Thin heads, Remo Pinstripes, and Evans G2 clear and coated models, but the drums continue to sustain (ring) forever. I've tried muffling rings (they rattle) and Moon Gel with no acceptable results. I hate to use duct tape, but it's the only method I've found to dampen the overwhelming sustain. Unfortunately, it also deadened the attack and rebound to where the stick response was like hitting mud.

I know you guys have tuned thousands of drums. What heads will warm up this kit yet retain great stick response?

Kurt Lundquist

If you just want a warm sound, we suggest trying Remo FiberSkyn 3 heads, in the FA weight. They're designed to produce an old-fashioned calfskin sound. Aquarian has a series called Modern Vintage that has the same goal. However, neither of these heads is specifically designed to reduce ring.

Judging by the heads you've already tried unsuccessfully, it seems like you need to reduce ring a tremendous amount. The best heads we know of to do that are Evans Hydraulics. They won't produce the same stick response that single- or even double-ply non-hydraulic heads will, but they would be better than playing on heavily taped-up heads. Another option might be Attack No Overtone heads. They have a thick "tone ridge" around their outer edge designed to deaden overtones—hence their name.

Practicing Traditional Grip

I have a question about my left-hand grip. When it comes to timekeeping, traditional grip feels good. But when it comes to playing a fill, or something fast in general, I have a problem, especially with my fingers. Should I begin practicing matched grip first to strengthen my muscles, and then move to traditional grip? Or is it a matter of feel?

John Pipis

Practicing matched grip in order to strengthen your muscles for traditional-grip playing would be like practicing swinging a baseball bat in order to improve your golf game. The best way to strengthen the muscles involved in traditional-grip playing is to practice using traditional grip.

On the other hand, whether to use traditional or matched grip is simply a choice that you can make according to the musical and physical requirements of what you're playing. If playing time with traditional grip feels good, go ahead and use it for that purpose. If you can execute fast passages and fills better using matched grip, it shouldn't be a problem to turn the stick (or play with the butt end). Grip selection is one of the tools of our trade. You don't have to use one tool all of the time.

QUESTIONS FOR MD'S DRUM EXPERTS?

Send them to It's Questionable, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, or rvh@moderndrummer.com.
Please include your full name with your question.

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Steve Smith's Setup For Buddy's Buddies

Hein Kromberge

Q Your drumming has inspired me for years, but your work on *Steve Smith & Buddy's Buddies: Very Live At Ronnie Scott's, Set One* is particularly amazing. I love the nuances of the drum mix. I'm wondering about the white Sonor kit that is pictured inside the CD, which is not what we're used to seeing you play. What are the sizes of that particular kit? Also, what cymbal setup were you using for that performance? **Brian Jezuit**

A I'm glad you're enjoying the Ronnie Scott's recording. I have such a great time playing with the members of Buddy's Buddies: Steve Marcus, Andy Fusco, Mark Soskin, and Baron Browne. The music is a lot of fun to play, too.

The kit pictured in the CD artwork is a "loaner" that Sonor provides for endorsers when they play in England. It's a White Sparkle Designer Series in maple, with a 22" bass drum, 8", 10", and 12" rack toms (I'm not sure of the depths), 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, and a matching 5x14 maple snare drum. This is the setup I use most of the time, except that I normally use a 20" bass drum. Sonor didn't have a 20" bass drum in London at that time, so I went with the 22" and it worked out well.

I set up the bass drum with clear Remo PowerStroke 3 heads, with felt strips on each and no hole in the front head. I used a Remo FiberSkyn 3 Diplomat on the top of the snare drum. The toms were fitted with clear Ambassadors.

The double pedal was a special assembly that I put together with a strap-drive "light" footboard DW 5000 on the right and a "heavy" DW 5000 footboard on the left. These days I use the DW Titanium 9000, and it's *amazing*.

The cymbals were my own personal Zildjians. From left to right in the picture, they are: 14" hi-hats (my own mix of a Mastersound bottom and K Custom Dark top), an 18" A Custom Fast crash, a 20" A Custom Sizzle ride, an 8" A Custom splash, a 21" K Custom Special Dry ride, an 18" K Custom Fast crash, 12" over 14" China Trash Hats, and an 18" K Flat Top ride.

I used my Vic Firth Steve Smith Signature model sticks, a Kenny Aronoff cowbell, and Shure mic's. That's about all the details there are to tell! By the way, if you like *Set One*, be sure to check out *Very Live At Ronnie Scott's, Set Two*. And thanks for your interest.

Burning With Ian Paice

Q I really appreciate your style. It's had a great influence on me—especially your playing on *Burn*. My dad and I always listen to that album in the car.

My particular question concerns the intro to the song "Fireball." My dad and I have been debating about whether you played it with a very fast, very controlled single kick foot, or with double bass. I'd appreciate your resolving that for us. **Stephen Boegehold**

A Thanks for the question and the kind words. I've openly admitted in the past that the "Fireball" drum intro was played on two bass drums. We tried the track with me playing on one drum, and although I could just about get the speed and groove, it had no power. Luckily, The Who had been recording in the studio the night before, and Keith Moon's kit was still there. So I "borrowed" one of his kicks, stuck it next to mine, and did the track.

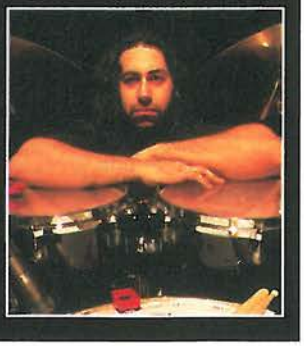
The great thing about that intro isn't that it's difficult to play. It's the fact that it sets the song up so well.

Alex Solca

Repeat Bar

A Classic Quote From MD's Past

"The way I create drum parts is to try to play things I can't do right away. But it's never about just making them hard to play; it's about making them *killer*. I want the parts to come across really groovy, and that's one of the hardest things to do—make things really crazy, yet have it groove."



Fear Factory's **Raymond Herrera**, May 1999

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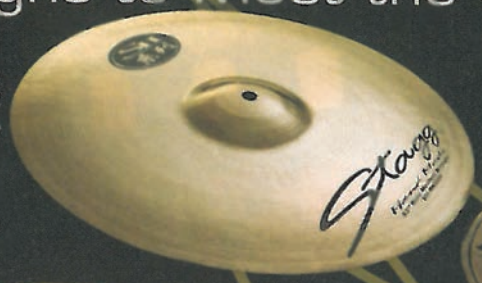

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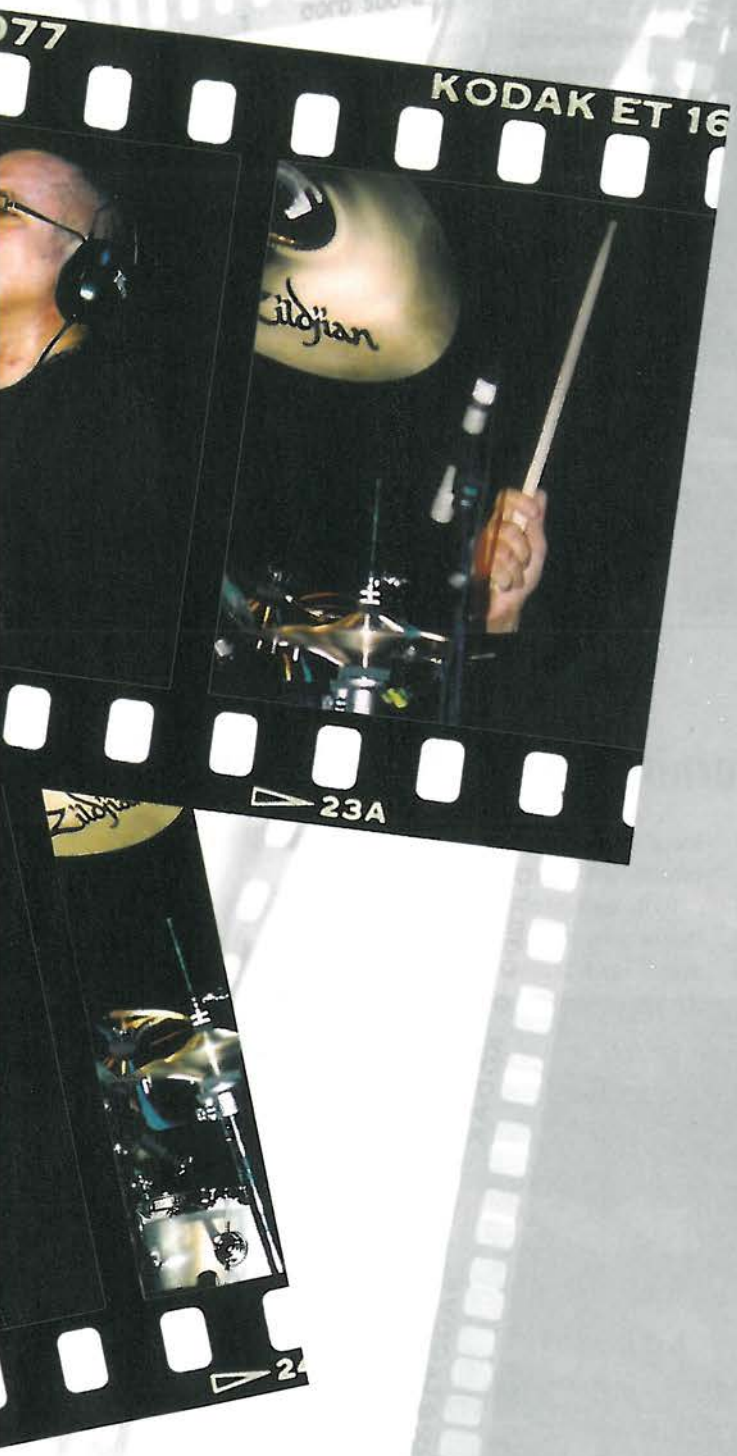
Billy Ward's Big Time

Making Motion Pictures



The last thing Billy Ward wanted to do was churn out yet another drum video. So instead he made what he proudly calls a *movie*. Two years in the making, *Big Time* incorporates elaborate multiple-camera shots and pricey mastering at Universal film studios. Billy is characteristically blunt when discussing his reasons for going the extra mile.

"For one thing," he explains, "on a lot of DVDs, the artist is talking as if someone is holding his wife hostage! And while I appreciate that technically it's difficult to record the voice while a drum is ringing, one of my goals was to avoid that. I also wanted to make something that wasn't like bad-tasting medicine. I love teaching, and this movie means I can reach more people. When editing, Neil Miller, the associate producer, and I were constantly asking, 'Is it teaching something at this very moment?'"

The core of *Big Time* is not your usual drum wisdom. Billy contends that when playing we weave, not necessarily consciously, a sort of web from strands of beats and bodily motions. In *Big Time*, he untangles that web, providing us with appropriate tools—physical movements to match specific rhythms, tempos, and musical styles. It's the most novel approach to come down the pike in years.

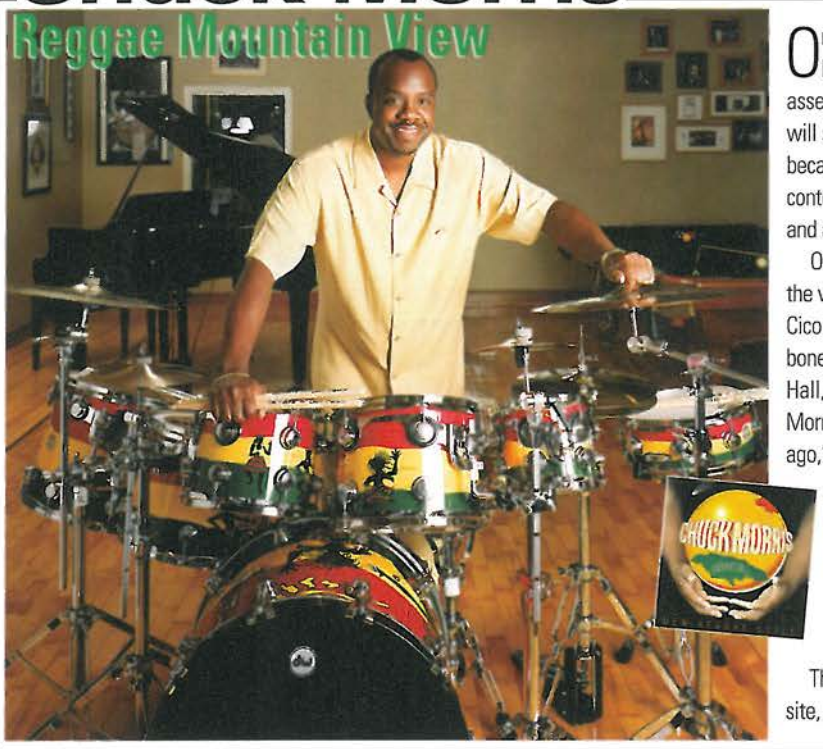
"It took me a lot of work to figure out time and groove," Billy admits. "It tortured me, and I know it tortures others. They go, 'Is it just me, or is it the bass player?' I feel that this DVD offers great peace of mind. The concepts discussed worked for me—and I'm an idiot! Everybody else who's tried the system thanks me."

Last summer Billy toured with Joan Osborne. This year, he's busy in the studio producing and playing with the breaking band The Goldbrickers and songwriter Jon Albrink. Clinics and master classes are a growing concern for Billy as well, totaling over a dozen in 2004. He's looking to surpass that in 2005. For more on Billy, go to www.billyward.com.

T. Bruce Wittet

Chuck Morris

Reggae Mountain View



On the cover of *Standing On A Mountain*, the new record by Chuck Morris & Freedom, it states "new reggae style." Explaining this assertion, Morris says, "A lot of people who hear the band or the record will say, 'I'm not a fan of reggae, but I like what you do,' and I think that's because we combine a modern funk attitude, jazz horn lines, and other contemporary elements with the root style of reggae. It's more aggressive and a little more exciting, which grabs people."

On this project, drummer Morris wrote many of the songs and supplies the vocals, but he says he couldn't have done it without his bandmembers Cico Silva (trumpet), Aragorn Wiederhold (guitar), Matt Woodworth (trombone), Dre Gipson (keyboards), Ernie Munoz (saxophone)—and Arsenio Hall, for that matter. Chuck's former boss shares a funny dialog with Morris at the top of the record about funk, "like in the old days, ten years ago," when Chuck was the house drummer on Hall's TV show.

Besides taking a very funky, soulful drumming approach, Morris also stretches out at times. "I think listeners are going to get a good deal of variety from this record," he predicts. "They're going to enjoy hearing a live record with full-on band and horns. And most people may be surprised to hear me singing. But I also made sure to give drumming fans a taste of what I can do on the kit."

The record is currently available at live gigs or through Morris's Web site, www.chuckmorrisandfreedom.com. **Robyn Flans**

Duran Duran's Roger Taylor

Returning To The Seat Of Power

Duran Duran's recent *Astronaut* is the band's twelfth album, yet only its fifth featuring the original members of the band. After a demanding five years in the spotlight, drummer Roger Taylor retreated in 1985 to a simple life in England with his family, and guitarist Andy Taylor left the group as well. For the most part, Duran Duran became absent from the top of the pop charts. But in 2000, all of the original bandmembers were in the right headspace to play together again, and hopefully regain their role as a hit-making machine.

"It was very important that we *all* had decided to do it," Taylor insists. "We knew if we were going to do this, it had to be a full-on commitment. There had to be a new album and a new creative chapter for the band."

"Sunrise," *Astronaut*'s opening song, features Taylor playing a beat resembling that of "Girls On Film," from the group's early-'80s heyday. It's like he never stepped away. "I had a kit set up in the house from the moment I left the band to when I came back to the band," the drummer states. "I played every day. When I originally left the band, somebody called and said, 'I've got all your drums here. What do you want me to do with them?' I said, 'Just bring them over to the house.' This guy turned up with about *twenty* drumkits and *fifty* sets of cymbals, because I was one of the first Tama endorsers."

As for the Simmons electronic drums that rounded out his kit back in the day, they've gone missing. "Unfortunately, I chucked a lot of them or gave them away," Taylor laments. But that hasn't curtailed his interest. He's now using Roland V-Drums and Octapads to reproduce some of the old sounds. And he's still behind Tamas, playing a set of Starclassics.

Duran Duran spent the better part of three years recording *Astronaut*, and launched club tours in 2003 and 2004 that filled houses in Japan, the United States, and England. A full tour of the US starts in February.

"I love being back on stage," Taylor says excitedly. "I'd forgotten how much I missed it. It's a powerful seat, the drummer seat. It's all coming from what you do with that kick drum. That's why I started playing, to play live and feel the adrenaline from the audience. When you experience that and then you don't have it, you feel something is missing. To get that back has been incredible." **Jason Kellner**

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THE KILLERS'

Ronnie Vannucci

Hot Fuss On Drums

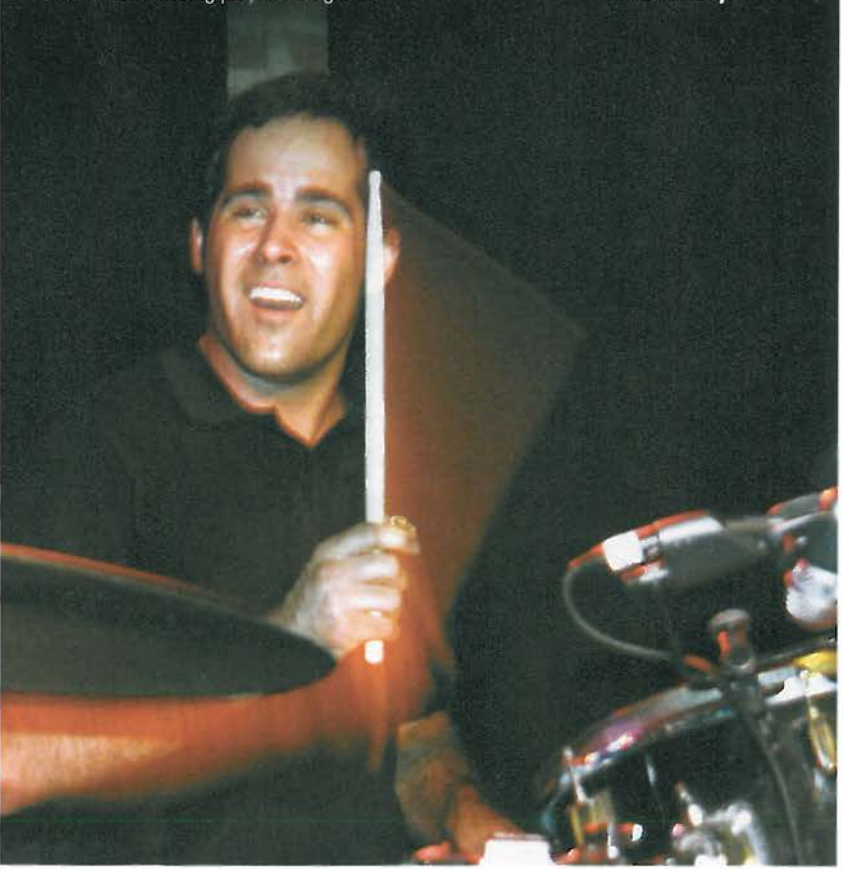
They say, "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." Fortunately for The Killers, this isn't always the case. The '80s-influenced Las Vegas band first created a buzz in the UK with an indie-label single, "Mr. Brightside," before landing a major-label deal here in the States. Non-stop touring and the hit song "Somebody Told Me" helped make The Killers' debut, *Hot Fuss,* one of the most well-reviewed and commercially successful albums of 2004. "Since I was a little kid, I've wanted to be part of something like this," says drummer Ronnie Vannucci. "What's happened to our band is a dream come true."

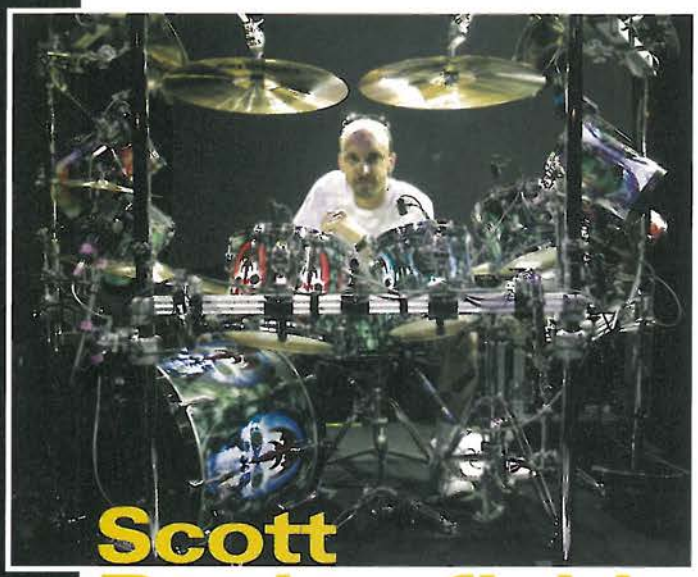
While The Killers' music is critically compared to pivotal '80s groups like Duran Duran, The Psychedelic Furs, and The Cure, Ronnie's drumming influences go a bit further back. "I think Mitch Mitchell is the perfect combination of rock and jazz," he says. "I love drummers who know when to change it up and play musically, using power when needed or playing with finesse when that's called for. I strive to be that kind of a drummer."

Vannucci says he also admires Keith Moon and legendary jazz drummers like Buddy Rich, Philly Joe Jones, Max Roach, Louie Bellson, and Gene Krupa. "My drumming owes *a lot* to those guys," he claims.

Although very little programming was integrated into the album, Ronnie employs specific techniques for getting very square, drum-machine-like rhythms from his kit. "I wanted 'Smile Like You Mean It' to sound stiff and square in certain parts, like in the bridge," he explains. "To do that, I laid a lot of the meat of the stick into the hi-hat to really make it sound chunky. I also have some great cymbals from the '40s, '50, and '60s that I used on the album. For that song I'm playing some vintage Zildjian 15" hi-hats that gave me a nice chunky sound. That was an important element because I wanted to keep the beats simple. I often like to swing and play looser, but certain songs lend themselves to being played straighter."

Gail Worley





Scott Rockenfield

Returning To The Scene Of The Mindcrime

Fifteen years ago, Seattle-based progressive metal band Queensrÿche released the art-rock classic *Operation: Mindcrime.* To commemorate that release, the band will perform the highly acclaimed album in its entirety for a Winter 2005 tour. The finale of each show will preview *Operation: Mindcrime II,* the long-awaited sequel to the groundbreaking concept album. According to drummer Scott Rockenfield, "We've designed a unique theatrical presentation incorporating dual drumkits, actors, massive film screens, surround-sound effects, and more."

Looking back, Rockenfield recalls the making of *Operation: Mindcrime*: "*OMC* was written in the late '80s, when all sorts of scandals were going on in politics and religion. *OMC* was born from these issues. Back then my drumming approach was much more erratic and aggressive. Nowadays I spend more time evaluating the song. I look for ways to enhance what the song is trying to say both musically and drum-wise. Since the late '80s, I've worked very hard to approach my drumming more musically, and to speak as melodically as possible on the drumkit."

Will *OMC II* complete the story? "Our plan with *OMC II* is to lay to rest theories our fans have had for years regarding the story, mainly, 'Who killed Sister Mary?' It is really a challenge for us to revisit the *OMC* era and give it what it deserves. I plan on approaching *OMC II* by putting myself back in my shoes from the late '80s and finding a common musical thread to expand upon. I'm thinking about using a double kick drum setup, which I've not done in many years—and possibly a huge drumkit all together."

On top of recording and touring, Rockenfield has started his own company called RockenWraps, which offers custom drum wraps. "I started RockenWraps a few years ago for my own drums," he says. "I was tired of my drums looking the same as everyone else's. The concept was well received, so I launched the company to the public one year ago, with much success." Check out RockenWraps at www.rockenwraps.com.

Mike Haid

Justin Foley
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Drive-By Truckers' Brad Morgan Going Into Overdrive

Driving the rhythm for a rock band with three guitarists and three songwriters can be daunting for any drummer, especially one whose drumset once consisted of only three drums. For Brad Morgan of Drive-By Truckers, the discipline of the less-is-more approach has taught him to play more for the song and less for the ego. "In the beginning, using a small kit came about because we didn't have much space in the music," Morgan says. "I was also playing in four or five bands at the time and didn't have a lot of gear."

The Alabama-bred Drive-By Truckers took the long-haul approach to success by touring clubs for more than 250 days a year, usually in just a van. Then, in 2001, *Rolling Stone* magazine printed a four-star review of the band's concept album, *Southern Rock Opera*, and things went into overdrive.

Until very recently, Morgan played an old Ludwig 24" bass drum, a snare drum, and a floor tom. For cymbals he used two old Zildjian K rides, one for a crash and one for a ride, and a pair of hi-hats. By striking the edge of his crash/ride and snapping away with his wrist, Morgan learned he could return to a quick ride pattern after a crash. For accented crashes he sometimes uses his left foot to pound a quick release on his hi-hat while letting both cymbals ring between the beat. "Whatever I play," Morgan says, "it's pretty much all about the song. And with a small kit, you learn to be creative."

Morgan continued to play an old, rusted green kit on tour, for TV appearances, and at festivals such as Farm Aid and Bonnaroo. But last August, when his band released *The Dirty South*, Morgan received a new Pearl Masterworks kit that features a combination of maple and African mahogany shells, which he says allows both impressive attack and warmth. He also uses Bosphorus cymbals.

Morgan's drumset is more impressive now, but he still writes his parts with economy. On "Boys From Alabama," from the new disc, he combines his snare backbeats with a mallet striking a music stand and the ping of two colliding crescent wrenches. Staying creative seems to be what it's all about for this drummer. **Stacy Peterson**

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DRUM DATES This month's important events in drumming history

Gone but not forgotten: **Karen Carpenter** was born on 3/2/50.

On 3/7/55, Carl Perkins' "Blue Suede Shoes" (with **W.S. Holland** on drums) enters the R&B chart. It would be the first time a country & western artist appeared on that chart.

As of 3/20/71, Iron Butterfly's classic rock song/drum solo "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" (with **Ron Bushy** on drums) had been on the charts for 138 weeks and sold over three million copies. As of March '05, sales have hit the thirty million mark.

On 3/20/72, **Ringo Starr** releases the second of his seven Top-10 singles, "Back Off Boogaloo," produced by George Harrison.

On 3/1/95, R.E.M. drummer **Bill Berry** leaves the stage during a Switzerland concert after suffering a brain aneurysm.

Happy Birthday!

Roy Haynes
(jazz giant): 3/13/25

Paul Motian
(jazz great): 3/25/31

Graeme Edge
(Moody Blues): 3/30/42

Ralph MacDonald
(percussion great): 3/15/44

Micky Dolenz
(The Monkees): 3/8/45

Harold Brown
(War): 3/17/46

John Hartman
(The Doobie Brothers): 3/18/50

Carl Palmer
(ELP, Asia): 3/20/50

James "Diamond" Williams
(The Ohio Players): 3/27/50

Kenny Aronoff
(session great): 3/7/53

Matt Frenette
(Loverboy): 3/7/54

Tony Brock
(The Babys): 3/31/54

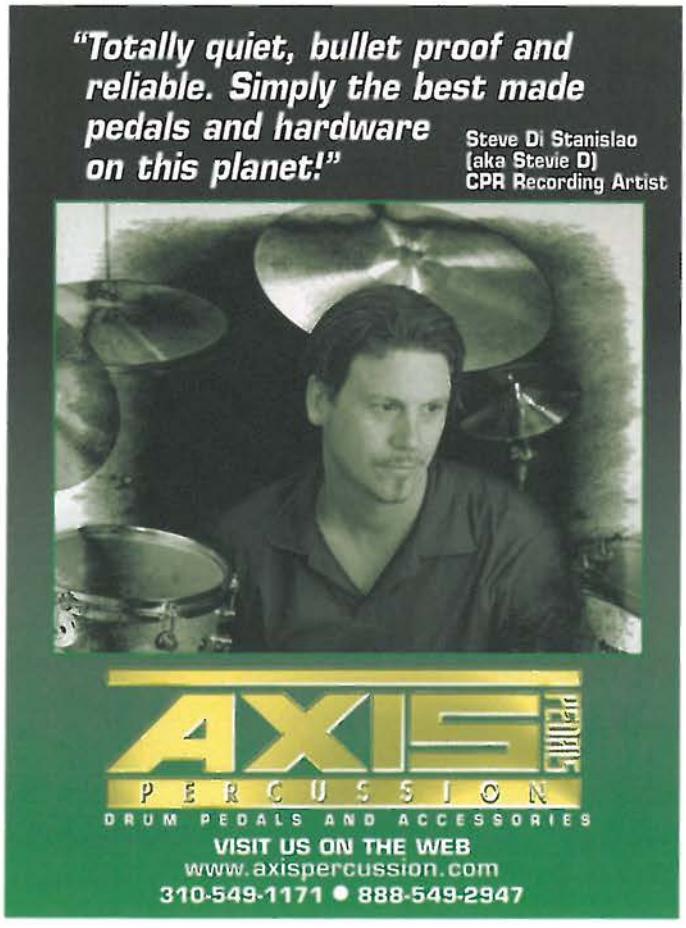
Slim Jim Phantom
(The Stray Cats): 3/20/61

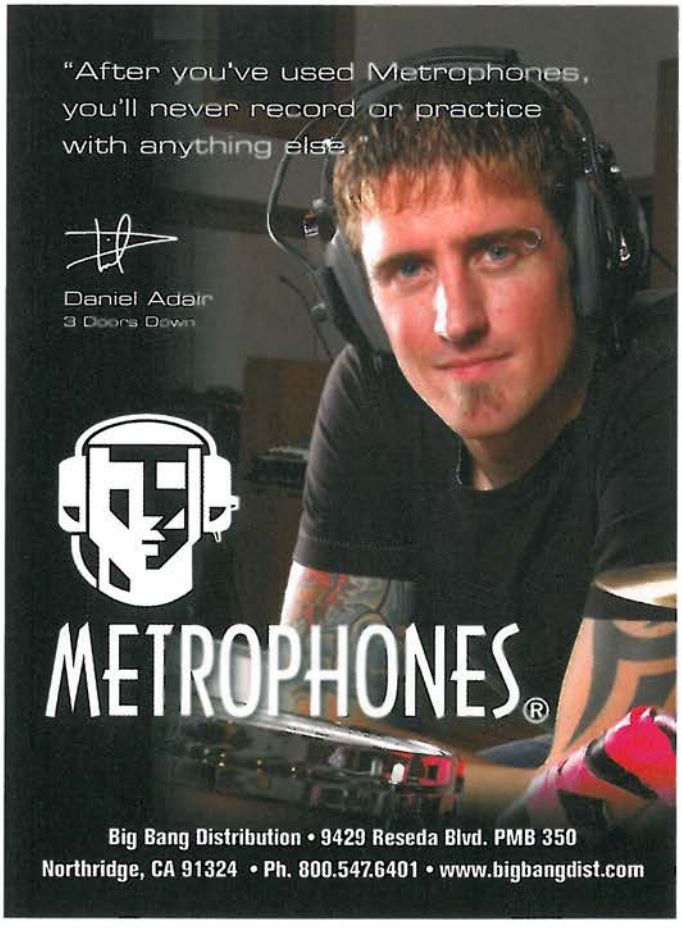
Rob Affuso
(Skid Row): 3/1/63

Dave Krusen
(Pearl Jam): 3/10/66

Brendan Hill
(Blues Traveler): 3/27/70

Caroline Corr
(The Corrs): 3/17/73





25th Anniversary

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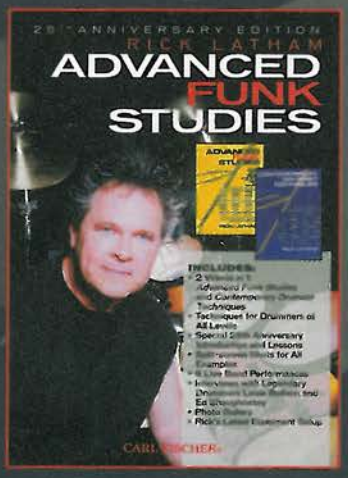

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NEWS

Larry Mullen Jr. is on the new U2 album, *How To Dismantle An Atomic Bomb*. Their single "Vertigo" is Apple's iPod theme.

Ian Wallace is currently playing in LA for the musical *Ten Commandments*.

Eddie Bayers is featured on the George Jones 50th-anniversary special, which will eventually be released as a two-hour DVD.

Zach Danziger can be heard on the new *Oceans 12* soundtrack.

Rick Marotta is the musical composer for John Goodman's new TV sitcom, *Center Of The Universe*.

Akira Tana has released a new CD, *Moon Over The World*.

Sully Erna and **Shannon Larkin** do a double drum solo on Godsmack's new DVD, *Changes*.

Matt McDonough is on the new Mudvayne release, *Lost And Found*.

Gordon Campbell and percussionist **Nino Sanchez** will be featured in the upcoming Jessica Simpson DVD, *Reality Tour Live*.

Congratulations to **Gary Seligson** and his wife on the recent birth of their son, Jacob.

Daniel Adair is currently recording a new album with 3 Doors Down.

Preston Nash has finished the drum tracks for the upcoming Society 1 release.

Mike Mangini will be featured on the soon to be released *Annihilator: Ten Years In Hell* DVD.

Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez's *Live At The 2000 Modern Drummer Festival* has finally been released on DVD. Horacio opens the set with a drum and percussion duet with percussionist **Marc Quiñones**.

Sebastian de Krom is currently on the road with pianist Jamie Cullum, whose *All At Sea* has broken into the mainstream.

Congratulations to Paiste artist relations director and Glen Frey percussionist **Rich Mangicaro** on his recent marriage to Carrie.

Tommy Aldridge is on tour with Whitesnake.

Greg Babcock is on tour with Edgar Winter.

Mark Baker is on tour with Ministry.

Josh Riskin is now the principal drummer at San Francisco's *Beach Blanket Babylon*. He can also be seen and heard on the new DVD *Dan Hicks And An All Star Cast Of Friends Live At The Warfield*.

Kevin Ricard, **Karl Perazzo**, and **Vinnie Colaiuta** were part of the lineup that graced the recent Latin Grammy's Recording Academy Person Of The Year tribute to Carlos Santana.

Marcus Randolph is on tour with The Robert Randolph Family Band.

Master percussionist **Candido Camero** was honored in New York City in September with a premiere of the film *Candido: Hands Of Fire*. The documentary was followed with a special ASCAP achievement award ceremony and reception, which featured a speech by Candido's good friend Tony Bennett. Candido can also be heard on the recently released CD *Inolvidable*, with singer Graciela Perez.

Jonathan Mover has been busy recording with Shakira. He can also be heard on new releases by Everlast (*White Trash Beautiful*), They Might Be Giants (*The Spine*), and Calvin Earl (*Gratitude*). Check out Mover's studio Web site, www.skystudnyc.com.

Michael Barker was recently on a tour of the States with The John Butler Trio. They are about to embark on a tour of Europe. Check out all the dates at www.johnbutlertrio.com.

Jared Wrennall is on Steriogram's debut, *Schmack*.

Jonathan Joseph, **David "Jody" Hill**, **Willburn "Squiddly" Cole**, **Astor "Crusty" Campbell**, and **Cindy Blackman** are all on Joss Stone's latest CD, *Mind Body & Soul*.

Gerry Brown is on tour with Diana Ross.

Teddy Campbell is on the road with Bette Midler.

Craig Macintire is on tour with Josh Groban.

Russ Miller is on tour with Bobby Caldwell.

Donald Tardy is on tour with Andrew WK. He's also been touring with Obituary.

Adam Topol has been on the road with Jack Johnson.

Chris Sharrock and **Virgil Donati** are on the *Alfie* movie soundtrack CD, featuring songs written and performed by Mick Jagger and Dave Stewart.

Andrew Black is on The Explosion's major-label debut, *Black Tape*.

Will Calhoun is the musical director on Mos Def's CD *The New Danger*.

Charlie Watts is on The Rolling Stones' double live CD, *Live Licks*.

Levon Helm, **Matt Johnson**, and **Sterling Campbell** are on Rufus Wainwright's latest CD, *Want Two*.

Sonny Emory is on the road with Bruce Hornsby.

Richard Hughes is on tour with Keane.

Ralph Humphrey is on tour with Natalie Cole.

Legendary ELP drummer **Carl Palmer** has a new live disc out, *Working Live, Volume 2*. For more info, go to www.carlpalmer.com.

Matt Wilson is on Rick Stone's *Samba De Novembro*.

Carmine Appice is on *It Takes A Lot Of Balls*, his new duo project with Pat Travers.

John Riley is on *Thought Trains* by Mike Holber And The Gotham Jazz Orchestra.

Nasheet Waits is on *Same Mother* by pianist Jason Moran.

Russell Simins is on *Damage*, the latest by Blues Explosion. **Steve Jordan** produced some cuts.

To hear some of the artists mentioned in this month's *Update*, go to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.

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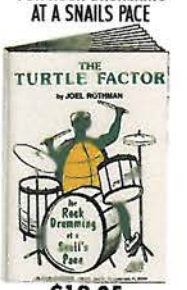

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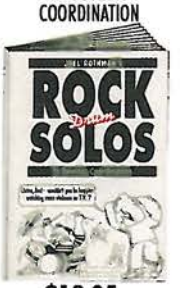

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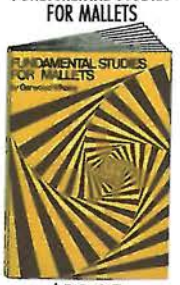

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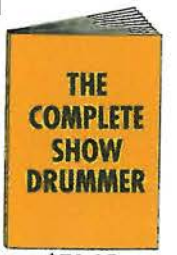

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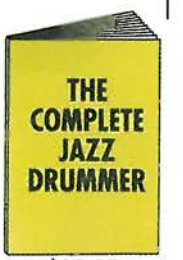

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- MARCO MINNEMANN

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Tama TotalWood Woodhoop Snares

Letting Nature Take Its Course

HITS

visually beautiful

outstanding construction quality

wood hoops contribute to distinctive sound character

MISSES

15¼" overall diameter won't fit in all snare stands

drums are only available in 5½" depth

by Russ Barbone

Tama is well known for their drumkit lines, which enjoy a reputation for strength and acoustic quality. However, for some reason Tama isn't as well known for their artistry when it comes to individual snare drums. It's true that signature drums from Mike Portnoy, Lars Ulrich, Simon Phillips, Bill Bruford, and Stewart Copeland have gotten quite a bit of exposure. But the average drummer on the street may not know that Tama also offers some really exquisite snare drums in their TotalWood series.

Perfect examples of Tama's wood-snare craftsmanship are the limited-edition drums that are the subject of this review. These visually beautiful 5½x14 drums feature 7-ply, 6-mm thick 100% maple shells, with an outer ply of select bird's-eye maple in a choice of two different stains. Complementing the shells are solid wood hoops top and bottom.

The model ABE655C-ASB features an Autumn Sunburst finish and hoops made of select cherry wood. The model ABE655M-CBE features a Charcoal finish contrasted by light-colored select maple hoops.

Both drums use the same hardware components, including ten lugs with rubber vibration isolators and 20-strand Snappy Snares. Batter side heads are Evans coated G1s; snare-side heads are Evans Resonant 300s. The drums carry a five-year warranty on the shells and a one-year warranty on the hardware.

Construction Quality

The quality and attention to detail involved in the construction of these drums just jumps out at you. Upon taking off the heads to examine things more thoroughly, I could see that the bearing edges were flawless, with very shallow snare beds. Cutouts in the bottom hoops allow the snare-holding strips to connect to the throw-offs and butt plates.

Autumn Sunburst finish with cherry hoops

The inner plies of the shells had absolutely no overlap; they met each other totally flush at the seam. Tama's position is that any irregularity on the inner shell will prevent the drum from resonating properly, while a totally flush joint will bring out all of the drum's natural vibrational characteristics.

The wood hoops are a very substantial ¾" thick and 15/16" high. They feature perfectly sanded edges and countersunk holes for the tuning bolts.

The MCS70 snare throw-offs feature release arms that drop straight out and away from the shell, as well as rubber-coated tension knobs that make on-the-fly adjustments easy and convenient. The strainers on both of our review drums functioned perfectly.

Charcoal finish with maple hoops

Also of note is the fact that the Snappy Snares are connected to the throw-offs and butts by ⅝"-wide woven fabric strips. This eliminates "snare bounce" and the annoying accompanying noises that occur from the snare end caps rattling against the snare head. It's a very nice feature that's sometimes overlooked by other snare-drum manufacturers. The fabric strips are secured in the strainers and butt plates with standard drumkey bolts for convenient adjustment.

Visual Appeal

Both of our review drums were, quite simply, visually stunning. There is something about the look of a high-quality, natural wood finish that I think appeals to most people—and to drummers in particular—on a deep level. After all, the first drums were made from wood. The TotalWood snares hearken back to a time of handcrafted wood instruments. Add to that the benefits of modern-day technology and manufacturing quality, and you have a winning combination.

Acoustic Performance

Each of the TotalWood snares produced the familiar woody "crack" that maple drums are known for. Each drum had a nice tuning range, with a special emphasis on the middle-tension area, where the 7-ply wood shell with no reinforcing rings contributed a full, warm tonality. Quiet brushwork and cross-stick playing was well defined and articulate.

The "crack" of each drum developed into a deep yet penetrating "thrawk" when rimshots were played on the wooden hoops. Rimshots played on the maple hoop of the Charcoal-stained drum had a slightly brighter tone than those played on the cherry hoop of the Autumn Sunburst model. But this was a *very* subtle difference. Otherwise, the drums had virtually identical sonic characteristics.

Final Thoughts

I have two comments regarding the dimensions of the TotalWood snares. First: Since the hoops are ⅝" wide, the actual working diameter of each 14" drum is 15¼". Not all snare stands can handle this extra width. Out of three stands I had on hand, only one held the snare correctly. You'll want to check out your stand's maximum width adjustment before considering the purchase of one of these drums. (Or be prepared to buy a stand that will accommodate the drum.)

Second: It's sort of a shame that both of the TotalWood snares are "limited edition" models only available in a 5½" depth. Their sound would certainly make them desirable for a jazz or light rock setup. But drummers who lean more toward a larger, louder rock sound might prefer a 6½" depth to better match their acoustic palette. With drums that sound this good and are this beautiful, why leave anybody out?

THE NUMBERS

5½x14, Autumn Sunburst finish, cherry hoops $499.99
5½x14, Charcoal finish, maple hoops $499.99
(215) 638-8670, www.tama.com.

Sabian Jack DeJohnette Resonating Bells

Into The Realm Of The Melodic

HITS

unique sounds provide wide sonic potential

can be used individually or in sets

available mounting bars provide positioning flexibility

by Norman Arnold

Legendary jazz drummer Jack DeJohnette is as well known for his unique taste in drum and cymbal sounds as he is for his distinctive playing style. So it should come as no surprise to anyone that he would get together with the innovative design team at Sabian to create a new and unique sound palette for drummers and percussionists.

Sabian's Jack DeJohnette Resonating Bells are handcrafted from solid bronze, then tuned to specific notes. They're available as a complete-octave (C to C) set of thirteen bells, as well as individually. Sabian offers mounting bars for three- or five-bell sets that can be fitted on the tops of cymbal stands. Individual bells can also be mounted on regular cymbal stands for complete freedom of positioning around a kit or in a percussion setup.

The Sound

I'll say one thing for these new bells: They're aptly named. They resonate. *Really* resonate. An average hit with a stick produces a clear, penetrating sound with a very definite pitch and a much longer decay than that of any cymbal. As tonal instruments, the bells have an almost Zen-style sound. (Think of the bells that Tibetan monks hit in a monastery before they begin to meditate.)

As a chromatic set, the bells offer a high degree of flexibility that would allow drummers to contribute to the sound palettes of their bands. If you were looking to expand from strictly indefinite-pitch sounds into more defined melodic sounds, this would be a really cool place to start.

Putting Them To Use

I set up the bells in a few different configurations, and was pretty much off and running with new ideas. To begin with, I found that it was possible to obtain many different sounds from a single bell. If I hit the top of the bell with the tip of a drumstick, I got an almost muted sound, reminiscent of a very heavy, thick flat ride. As I hit closer to the outer edge, the sound really opened up and began to sing. A solid whack at the outer edge with the shaft of the stick produced a long, open sound with a more definite pitch and more overtones than just about anything else out there.

Using vibe and marimba mallets created a very different tonality—quite effective at the pianissimo level. Playing a soft roll between two bells a half-tone apart produced a particularly interesting, ethereal sound. It instantly occurred to me that these bells would be excellent accent instruments for a percussionist or a mallet keyboard performer.

Next, I set up a group of five bells in a whole-tone scale alongside my drumset. It was really fun to have this collection of sounds to add to that of the kit. When I hit a pair of bells that were a 4th apart, and then played along on the drums, the resonating frequencies of the bells interacted with the overtones of the drums to create a *very* interesting effect.

Playing a full-octave set of the bells afforded me the opportunity to create all sorts of tonal combinations. Just hitting random bells and letting them vibrate created a unique mood. And when I dusted off my old four-mallet marimba technique and tried playing the full set of bells to create chords and melodies, the result was almost cinematic. The sustained tonalities and melodic interactions were very evocative.

Conclusion

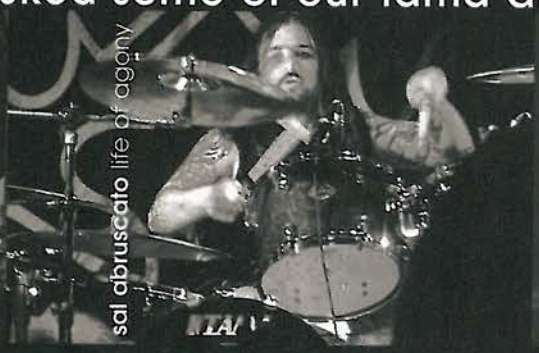
For years, drummers have been augmenting their basic drumkit sound with instruments that produce booms, crashes, clanks, whacks, pops, and other percussive—but not particularly *pretty*—sounds. The Jack DeJohnette Resonating Bells offer a completely different, much more *musical* option. Their potential would be limited only by the player's imagination.

THE NUMBERS

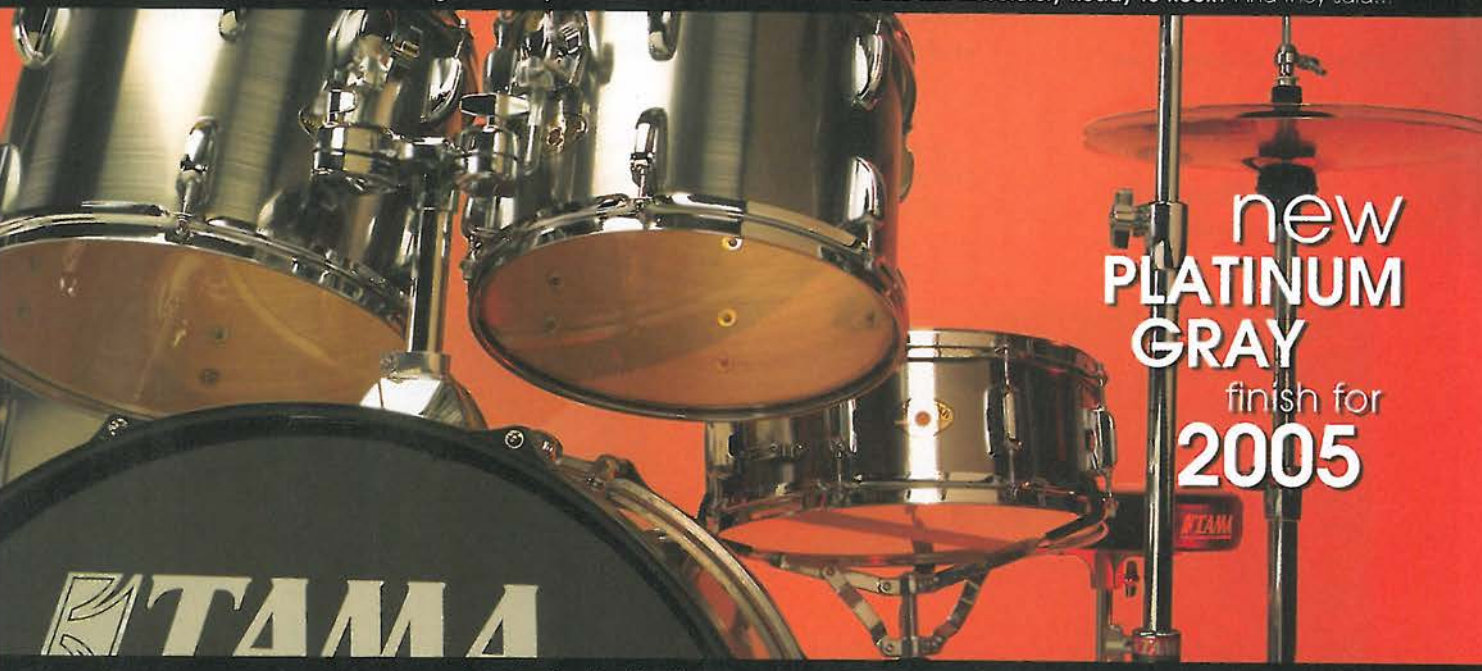
Single Resonating Bell	$ 75
Set of three Resonating Bells, with mounting bar	$ 225
Set of five Resonating Bells, with mounting bar	$ 375
Complete octave set of thirteen bells, with mounting bar	$1,299

Note: Buyer to stipulate specific note of single bell, as well as notes of three- and five-bell sets. Mounting bars fit on any regular cymbal stand.
(506) 272-2019, www.sabian.com.

We asked some of our Tama artists...



...what would they put in Swingstar Ready to Rock all-in-one sets to make the kits absolutely Ready To Rock? And they said...



"You need an **18" deep** kick like we play." So we said, okay. "You need better cymbals." So we upgraded to **genuine brass cymbals**. Then they said, "**Add another cymbal and a stand** to put it on. And change the **rack toms to Accel-size** for faster response. But don't change the **throne**!

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Custom showcase

EPEK Genesis Maple Kit

Ascending The Pecking Order

HITS

mirror-smooth finish and unique lugs

steep bearing edges offer good attack and resonance

exceptionally sensitive snare drum

drums perform well at all dynamic levels

Text by T. Bruce Wittet

Photos by Triska Photographic Art

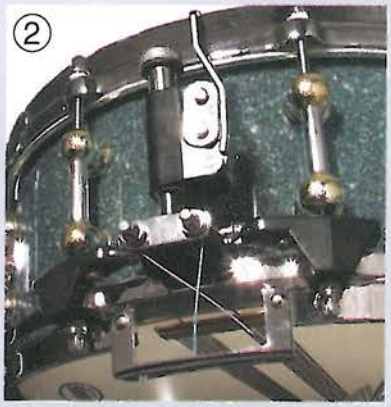
Ed Peck runs a small drum-crafting facility in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. He labors for the most part like a monk in solitary (with creative input from Canadian drummer Gerrard Gannon), sweating the details until he gets it right. Like most so-called "boutique manufacturers," Ed takes shells from one source, lugs from another, and strainers from yet another, and combines them in a way that is uniquely his own.

I've played EPEK snare drums in the past, always remarking on their extreme sensitivity. This review afforded me my first opportunity to check out a full drumset. By the end of the test, I could see why Ed Peck's kits are becoming backline staples in western Canada.

Our Review Set

Ed sent us a kit from his Genesis Maple series. It included a 17x20 10-ply bass drum, a 13x15 8-ply floor tom, 8x12 and 7½x10 8-ply rack toms, and a 5½x14 10-ply snare. All of the shells were by Keller.

The finish was truly spectacular. Called Green Prismatic Flake, it was a lacquered green/turquoise glitter that varied in hue depending on the viewing angle. Under halogen light it was as smooth as glass and displayed rare depth.



1. Ego tube lug. 2. Our review snare drum featured a new Nickel Drumworks throw-off, as well as Puresound Percussion custom snare wires. 3. The bass drum came fitted with Ego clawless hoop lugs.

EPEK offers a choice of lugs, counterhoops, strainers...pretty much everything is up for grabs. It was clear that Ed had sent *MD* his upscale options on the review kit. Chromed die-cast rims each featured an EPEK decal. Bass drum hoops were fitted with clawless "hoop lugs," which are ingenious button-type protrusions manufactured by a company called Ego (www.egodrumlugs.com). These accepted the tension rods, eliminating the need for traditional claws.

The tom holder was a heavy sliding-mount model that offered virtually infinite angling and proximity possibilities. Mounted toms were fitted with Gauger RIMS. Lugs, again by Ego, were large, knobby versions of vintage double-tube lugs, à la Leedy. Floor tom legs were fitted with Pearl's bulbous rubber feet, which incorporate an air cavity that cushions the legs from the floor. (I've retrofitted several of my own floor toms with these to enhance sustain.) Spurs were fully adjustable and effective.

The snare strainer was a Nickel Drumworks Floating Action model, which, at the time of this writing, was a prototype. It attached to two adjacent tension rods, as opposed to the shell. Snares were Puresound custom models.

ImPECKable!

Let's play devil's advocate for a moment. Couldn't anyone buy Keller shells, fit them with the variety of hardware described here, and arrive at a playable kit? What's special about EPEK?

Well, first there are the exquisite proprietary finishes. These range from hand-rubbed oil to lacquer glitters and fades, along with exotic wraps. Then there is the matter of *inside* finishes, which are judiciously applied in order to maximize drum tone.

Next, there's the bearing edges. Ed's bearing edges are not only perfect to the eye and to touch, they're also steeper than the norm. The standard cut on EPEK Genesis drums is 22°, which is *very* steep. The edges on our review kit were a custom 30° cut—still steep relative to the industry-standard 45° angle. Furthermore, where cut and countercut meet, the wood is honed to a fairly sharp edge.

When I queried Ed about this, he explained, "I find that a steeper angle—22° being the steepest—will produce slightly more attack. Damping is attained more from the roundness of the edge than from the actual angle of the cut. I'll work with my customers to design edges that will suit their needs."

Drum Sounds

The toms and snare were fitted with Evans J1 etched heads. The combination of the slightly spongy feel of these heads and the minimal head-to-bearing edge contact was pleasant to the touch—very organic. Although some drummers rave about how rounded vintage bearing edges promote woodier timbres, I experienced plenty of woody tone with EPEK's sharper edges.

The two mounted toms, tuned in the mid ranges, gave off that "drummer's dream" sort of groan, followed by a healthy sustain devoid of weird harmonics. The floor tom, with its 15" head and 13" depth, was a quick-speaking, throaty drum that offered extra controllability compared to a 16x16 tom. All of the drums took considerable beatings without choking. Yet they yielded an equally considerable amount of tone at a *pp* dynamic level.

The drums were extremely easy to tune. I really liked them cranked high, where they offered sustained rimshots and plenty of body. Tuned low, they were a rocker's delight. And "low" is the operative word for the kick sound. Equipped with an Evans EMAD batter, it was explosive, with punchy attack. When I removed the foam ring from the EMAD, the drum gained a healthy ambience while retaining plenty of attack.

I didn't get to record the drums. (*Blast* that phone for not ringing.) But I surmised that close-miking these drums would be a breeze, simply because errant overtones were minimal. In this respect Ed's bearing edges and his choice of heads worked like a charm. Still, just for fun I replaced the J1s on the toms with coated Remo Ambassadors. The drums became "thicker" sounding, but wanted for nothing in terms of attack or feel.

Then I replaced the EMAD on the kick drum with a coated Evans EQ1, which proved to be my personal favorite on this drum due to its increased openness and "give" under a pedal. A well-used Remo Emperor worked fine, too. Without a speck of muffling, it provided the controlled boominess you'd want for live playing with minimal miking.

On The Job

Which brings us to gigging. I took the review kit out to a club at which I've played countless times. The EPEKs were the loudest, punchiest drums I've brought into that room—and

Custom snare drums from EPEK include Danny Elder (left) and Jason Doell signature models.

The Premier Series
Hand crafted in England

One of the few truly hand-made drum ranges in the world today, the new Premier Series combines over 8 decades of drum-making experience with the latest design innovations uniting the very best of the past with a vision of the future. Radical new tension casings boasting individual style and vintage inspired pewter badges create a bold new look that truly stands out from the crowd. New features include sleek new insulated die-cast claw hooks and newly engineered tom brackets with hideaway memory lock. Maple, Birch or our hybrid Gen-X woods, traditional or classic shell construction, cool wraps, classic satins, premium lacquers and legendary high gloss sparkles.... the choices are endless, and Premier's world famous chrome plating is still the standard by which all others are judged. Experience the new Premier Series drums at these fine drum stores.

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I've played three of my own drumsets and several *MD* review kits there. Sometimes, with increased attack and volume, you lose breadth of tone. That was not the case this time, according to the band and audience members who offered unsolicited praise of the EPEKs.

I really must single out the snare drum. This 10-lug model was, in EPEK tradition, hypersensitive. In that respect, it reminded me of an orchestral drum. Press rolls sizzled, while backbeats were solid. I'm not a fan of die-cast rims on snare drums, but they worked on this one, providing sharp rimshots that didn't obscure the emphatically "snarey" sound. Cross-sticks...rimshots...loud, in-the-center playing...you name it, this drum did it well. This was a desert-island snare drum.

Ed Peck will also craft a custom snare drum to your specs, using ply or stave shells. To prove it, along with our review kit he also sent a 6x14 Jason Doell signature snare, a Danny Elder signature snare, and a 6x13 Legacy birch snare—each uniquely individual, all extremely sensitive.

Conclusion

EPEK offers high-end custom drums for those who appreciate a variety of elite options. Their prices are steep, but in my opinion the drums are worth the expenditure. Each kit is a one-off, and Ed Peck really does slave over the details. For example, he'll even alter the color or translucence of his distinctive urethane logo badges to complement the chosen finish on a kit.

For those who aren't as picky about options (or have more stringent budgets), EPEK also offers standard lines with less elegant appointments. And while you're not likely to receive a custom EPEK kit with any glitches, if you're *really* looking for a bargain, check out the "Scratch And Dent" section on the EPEK Web site.

Our review kit (shell pack only) sells for over five grand. You can get a version in a Liquid Satin finish, with less expensive lugs, strainer, and rims, for just over three. Those might not be entry-level prices, but they're a gateway to an ultra high-quality sound that's becoming popular—at least on the Canadian side of the border.

THE NUMBERS

Genesis Maple Kit (shell pack only). **$5,237**
Includes a 17x20 bass drum, a 13x15 floor tom, 7½x10 and 8x12 rack toms, and a 5½x14 snare drum, all in Green Prismatic Flake finish, with Ego lugs and die-cast rims.

Hardware includes free-floating Nickel Drumworks strainer, deluxe sliding tom holder, and floor tom legs with Pearl cushion feet. The same kit in Liquid Satin finish, with standard lugs, triple-flanged rims, non-sliding tom holder, and basic Nickel Drumworks strainer, is priced at $3,075.

(306) 359-3735, www.epekpercussion.com.

RESONATING BELLS

With bright, penetrating responses tuned to specific notes, Resonating Bells offer drummers and percussionists - everyone from jazz and world, to rock and progressive - musical sounds to play individually, in groups, or as a set arranged like keys on a piano. Add them anywhere with special hardware, like Jack DeJohnette does, and expand your sound.

A 14" Signature Encore Hats
B 13" Signature Encore Splash
C 17" Signature Encore Crash
D Signature Resonating Bells (C, C#, D, D#, E)
E 18" Signature Encore Crash
F 22" Signature Encore Mini-Bell Ride
G Signature Resonating Bells (F, F#, G, G#, A)
H 22" Signature Encore Flat Ride
I Signature Resonating Bells (A#, B, C)
J 22" Signature Encore Chinese

> sabian.com

New Pro-Mark Sticks And Accessories

Tools For Hitting Hard, Keeping Quiet, And Building Chops

HITS

new drumstick models offer good performance characteristics

X Mutes effectively reduce drum and cymbal volume

Pocket Pad and X Beats offer convenient portable practice options

MISSES

X Mute bass drum model needs better attachment system

X Mute hi-hat model needs additional muting disk

X Beat practice sticks may be too heavy for drumset players

by Mike Haid

Pro-Mark is fundamentally a drumstick company. That's their bread and butter, and this review reflects that, with a look at three recently introduced drumstick models.

But in the past couple of years Pro-Mark has expanded more and more into the realm of drum-related accessory items. Newest among those are drum mutes and practice pads, and we'll take a look at a couple of those here, too. The company has even managed to *combine* elements of sticks and practice pads in a single new item. We'll save that for last.

New Stick Models

We'll start with Pro-Mark's new TX2BXN Dave Lombardo Autograph model, designed with and for Slayer's powerhouse drummer. It's a hickory stick aimed at heavy hitters who still prefer a relatively lightweight stick. (We stress "relatively.") It's basically a slightly elongated 2B stick, measuring 16⅛" in length and 16 mm in diameter. The oval-shaped nylon tip provides excellent cymbal articulation, while a fairly short taper adds weight near the front for a good playing balance and plenty of impact power on the drums.

Next up is the TX747BXW model, created with and named for Puddle Of Mudd's Greg Upchurch. This hickory stick features an oval wood tip instead of nylon, for a mellower stick sound on the cymbals. Essentially, it's a longer version of Pro-Mark's 747B model. In fact, at 16¾" it's a bit longer than the Lombardo model. But it's a little smaller in diameter (15.3 mm), making it lighter in weight. There's also a more subtle taper to the Upchurch stick, which helps to distribute the weight evenly.

How did the sleek and slender TX710W Stinger model get stuck in with these beefy metal-monster sticks? It's the same length as the Lombardo stick (16⅛"), but it's much smaller in diameter (14 mm) than either the Lombardo or the Upchurch models. The Stinger is a light, 5A-type hickory stick with a long, narrow taper and a small, bullet-shaped wood tip for articulate playing and a lively rebound. This stick would work well for jazz and light- to moderate-volume playing.

X Mutes

Our first items from Pro-Mark's accessory line are called X Mutes. They're on-drum muting pads designed to offer limited rebound and controlled volume during practice. With a deep blue color that makes them visually attractive, they're similar in terms of texture and feel to other sponge-rubber muting pads. But their rubber is a bit denser and seems to grip the head more effectively. That being said, several of the tom mutes still bounced their way off the heads during a strong workout.

The bass drum mute features a thick sponge-rubber pad in its center for the beater to strike. This helps dampen the sound and allows more attack from the bass drum. The mute secures to the bass drum batter head via a circular, nickel-size hook-and-loop fastener patch located about 2" below the

top center of the mute. After installing and removing the mute several times, the patch eventually came unglued from the mute and remained fastened to the batter head.

I believe the patch system would be more effective if there were larger (perhaps quarter-sized?) patches located on the top, bottom, and sides of the bass drum mute. With only the one small patch at the top of the mute, there is no support from the bottom or the sides. This allows the mute to pull away from the drumhead on the bottom and sides, leaving a gap between the head and the mute.

In my case, the pulling away of the mute from the head also allowed the bottom of the mute to rest on the cam of my bass drum pedal. This would eventually wear down and tear the mute, to say nothing of the sluggish feel that was created by the pedal rubbing against the mute. There is a large oval cutout area to accommodate a double pedal, but the cam of my DW chain-drive single pedal was rubbing on the mute just below that area. Again, I think this could all be rectified by a stronger system of attaching patches.

X Mutes for cymbals feature the same "keyhole" shape as other mutes on the market, and they successfully absorb cymbal volume. My only criticism here is that the X Mute for the hi-hat is *only* a keyhole pad, for use on the top cymbal. There's no inner pad for use between the cymbals to achieve greater muting. This may be a cost-cutting measure, but it seems to make this particular model incomplete. The addition of a second, circular pad would solve that problem.

Don't let my comments above give you the wrong impression about the X Mutes. I have no hesitation in saying that they served their fundamental purpose—reducing drum and cymbal volume—exceptionally well. My criticisms deal mostly with functional issues. With a few slight modifications, the X Mutes could become the most durable and effective sponge-rubber mutes on the market.

Pocket Pad

Pro-Mark's Pocket Pad is a great little practice pad that offers studious players the capability of carrying a pad almost anywhere. The pad's light weight (5 oz.) and compact playing surface (3¼" x 7½") allow for easy storage and transportation in a backpack, lunch box, briefcase, or back pocket.

The Pocket Pad features a stable, rectangular wooden base with a rubber-coated bottom that grips most surfaces well. I gave the pad several hefty workouts on a Formica countertop, and not once did it jump or slide out of position. The firm gum-rubber playing surface allows for exaggerated rebound, and is fairly quiet. Nifty!

X Beats

Now we come to that combination of drumstick and practice pad elements I mentioned earlier: X Beats. These practice sticks are an innovative practice device for drummers, designed in conjunction with respected author and educator Matt Savage.

The sticks feature well-balanced hickory shafts, with gum-rubber tips similar in size and shape to those of timpani or tenor mallets. The TXXB1 is styled after the SD1 concert stick, with a 2B diameter but a slightly longer length (16½"). The TXXB2 is longer (17") and larger in diameter, designed after the DC2 marching stick.

The whole idea of the X Beat sticks is that they eliminate the need to carry a pad. When they're played on a hard surface, the rebound from the large gum-rubber tips is very exaggerated. Combined with the heaviness of the large stick, this makes for excellent rudimental practice. As such, X Beats are a great idea for marching and concert drummers. They might also appeal to drumset players accustomed to using heavy, large-diameter sticks. However, they're likely to feel *too* heavy to drumset players accustomed to playing with 5B or smaller sticks. With that in mind, Pro-Mark might want to consider offering X Beats in a wider variety of sizes.

THE NUMBERS

Drumsticks

Dave Lombardo Autograph (pair)	**$13.50**
Greg Upchurch Autograph (pair)	**$12.95**
Stinger (pair)	**$12.50**

X Mutes

Tom sizes 6" – 20"	**$6.00 – $13.00**
Snare sizes 10" – 15"	**$8.00 – $10.50**
Bass drum sizes 18" – 24"	**$24.00 – $30.00**
Cymbal sizes 16" – 22"	**$8.00 – $9.00**
Hi-Hat sizes 13" – 14"	**$12.00**
Pre-packs (five available)	**$36.00 – $83.00**

Pocket Pad	**$20.95**
X Beats (both models, pair)	**$26.95**

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Home Recording For Drummers

Part 1: Setting Up And Choosing Mic's

by Chris Vrenna

The more things change, the more they stay the same—especially for us drummers. Although recent years have brought many advances in digital-recording software and hardware, for drummers, nothing still beats the sound, energy, and feel that a live drum performance can add to recordings.

For most of us, though, cost, time, and even sonic taste keep us from going to a professional studio. Or maybe your guitar/keyboard player's drum programming doesn't quite capture your personal sound or style, leaving your demos something to be desired.

For my band tweaker's latest CD, *2 a.m. wakeup call*, I knew I wanted to focus the rhythmic beds on my drum performances, rather than on my programming, as I had done on my first tweaker CD, *the attraction to all things uncertain*. Now, tweaker is signed to a very cool, but not very *rich*, independent label. So I decided to find a way to record my drums at home but still make them sound dynamic and exciting.

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I was confident that I could figure out a way to do this, because I had been in earlier situations where some experimentation led to pretty great results. For instance, even when Nine Inch Nails had a big budget to record *The Downward Spiral*, we often chose to record drums at home just because the sound was totally unique. The song "March Of The Pigs," for instance, was recorded in our dining room with only three microphones!

To get started recording drums at home, we'll need the following: your drumset, assorted microphones, mic' cables and stands, an inexpensive mixer with microphone preamps to add gain, EQ, and sum your signals, and a computer with software to record the audio into. This list may seem daunting, but throughout this series we'll focus on inexpensive, professional-sounding gear that will free your creativity and not require you to take a second mortgage to afford.

Over the next four issues, we'll look at some of the good, the bad, and the ugly I've learned while recording my drumkit at home. So, click your sticks together three times and chant with me: "There's no place like home! There's no place like home!"

Drum Setup And Placements

The first question is, Where do I set up my kit? Part of what makes a good-sounding drum recording is the room in which the drums are set up. This is why the best-sounding recording studios are often the most expensive. But rest assured, you can still get great sounds in your less-than "professional" space.

Take a quick walking tour through your house. You'll discover you already have several different-sounding and usable spaces. Want that big "Bonham" sound? Use the garage for its roominess. Want a nice even-sounding space? Try your living or dining rooms (especially if they have hardwood floors). Want a tight but smacky sound? Your kitchen, with its linoleum floor, may be the ticket. And for that ultra-dry '70s sound, a small carpeted bedroom may be the perfect place.

After clearing out some furniture, the next step is to do a little room tuning. One of the worst sound offenders in a room is a right angle. Sadly, most rooms in your home likely only *have* right angles. I've gotten around this by simply leaning mattresses vertically in the corners, or tacking up some thick material like unused drapes, comforters, or blankets. If you want a mid-priced, more professional option, buy Owens-Corning model 703 fiberglass board. Cover these in cloth and screw them into the wall. This particular model of fiberglass diffuses sound equally across the sonic spectrum, so it works especially well.

An even cheaper solution for your walls is good old-fashioned egg cartons. I know some people will say that these don't work or that this method isn't "professional," but don't be afraid to try it. When placing any deadening material on the walls, always remember to place a "dead" area directly adjacent to a "live" area, like the squares on a checkerboard.

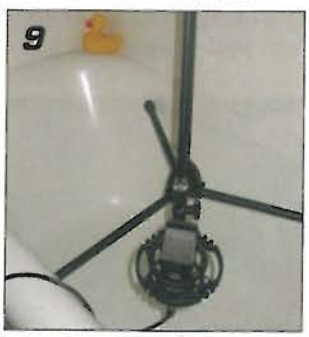
I used a very small (8'x10') carpeted bedroom for recording my drums for tweaker. To take as much advantage of room depth as possible, I set my drums up in the farthest corner, at an angle, facing toward the door. Setting up drums in a corner will also help prevent waveforms from bouncing at right angles.

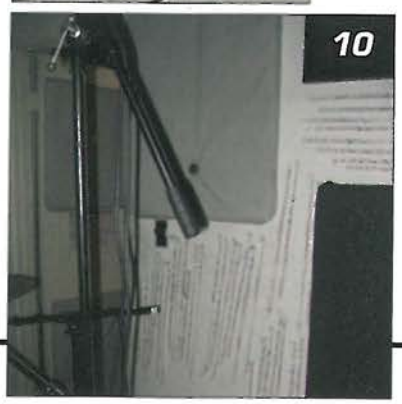
In my house there's a bathroom next to my bedroom, with a small hallway that both rooms come off of. To capture some ambient room tones, I would leave the bedroom door open and put a microphone in the hallway and in the adjacent bathroom. Also, if you own different-sized drums, try experimenting with these. I found that my smaller Yamaha kit—which has an 18" kick, a 10" rack, and 14" floor—sounded punchier in such a small space.

Microphones

Now that your kit is set, we need to mike it up. Forget all those photos you've seen of your favorite drummer in a fancy studio, with dozens of expensive or vintage microphones surrounding him or her. We're going to take a different approach.

Let's start with a basic close-miking setup. The most important drums are probably the kick and snare. I always mike these separately. For the snare I use the trusted Shure SM57 on the top head. I use the "3-finger" approach for its placement, where I position the mic' off the





Tweaking The Studio

1. Wide shot of the room, showing all the mic's on the kit.

2. A close-up of the miking on the kick drum. Notice the speaker. Try wiring a mic' cable to the two speaker leads. This will allow you to use the speaker as a mic'. I use an old Yamaha NS-10 speaker. It gives a real sub-bass sound.

3. Close-up of a Rode NT4 stereo mic'. A great space-saving option for overhead miking.

4. A side view of the kit, showing hats and toms. Notice the space-saving claw attachments for the tom mic's.

5. Recording hi-hats with a condenser mic'.

6. My "3-finger" approach. I place mic's off the heads approximately the width of three fingers.

7. PZM microphones.

8. A 414 mic' out in the hallway to capture more room.

9. The same mic' inside the bathtub. Mic's in the bathroom give a great "reverby" room tone.

10. A simple shot of the bedroom walls. Notice that there are panels on the control room door, as well as how I've "checkerboarded" them. I covered them in colored cloth and screwed them into the wall.

head at a distance about equal to the thickness of my index, middle, and ring finger together. If you have an extra channel (we'll talk more about routing options in Part 2), place another SM57 on the bottom head. This will add more sizzle from the snares.

For the kick drum, I use an AKG D-112 or an Audio-Technica 125 placed inside the front head, about halfway between the two heads, pointed at the spot where the beater strikes. If you want a "clickier" sound, move the mic' closer to the batter head. If you want a bit more bassy sound, move it away from the batter head. Experiment until you get the sound you like. These mic's are both fairly inexpensive and are commonly used in professional studios everywhere.

Tom miking is trickier from a cost standpoint. I use Sennheiser 421s on my toms, but at $400 each, this can get expensive. A great alternative is the Audix Fusion 7 mic' pack. For a very reasonable price, you get a kick mic', a snare mic', three tom mic's, and two cymbal mic's. I use the same "3-finger" approach for placement.

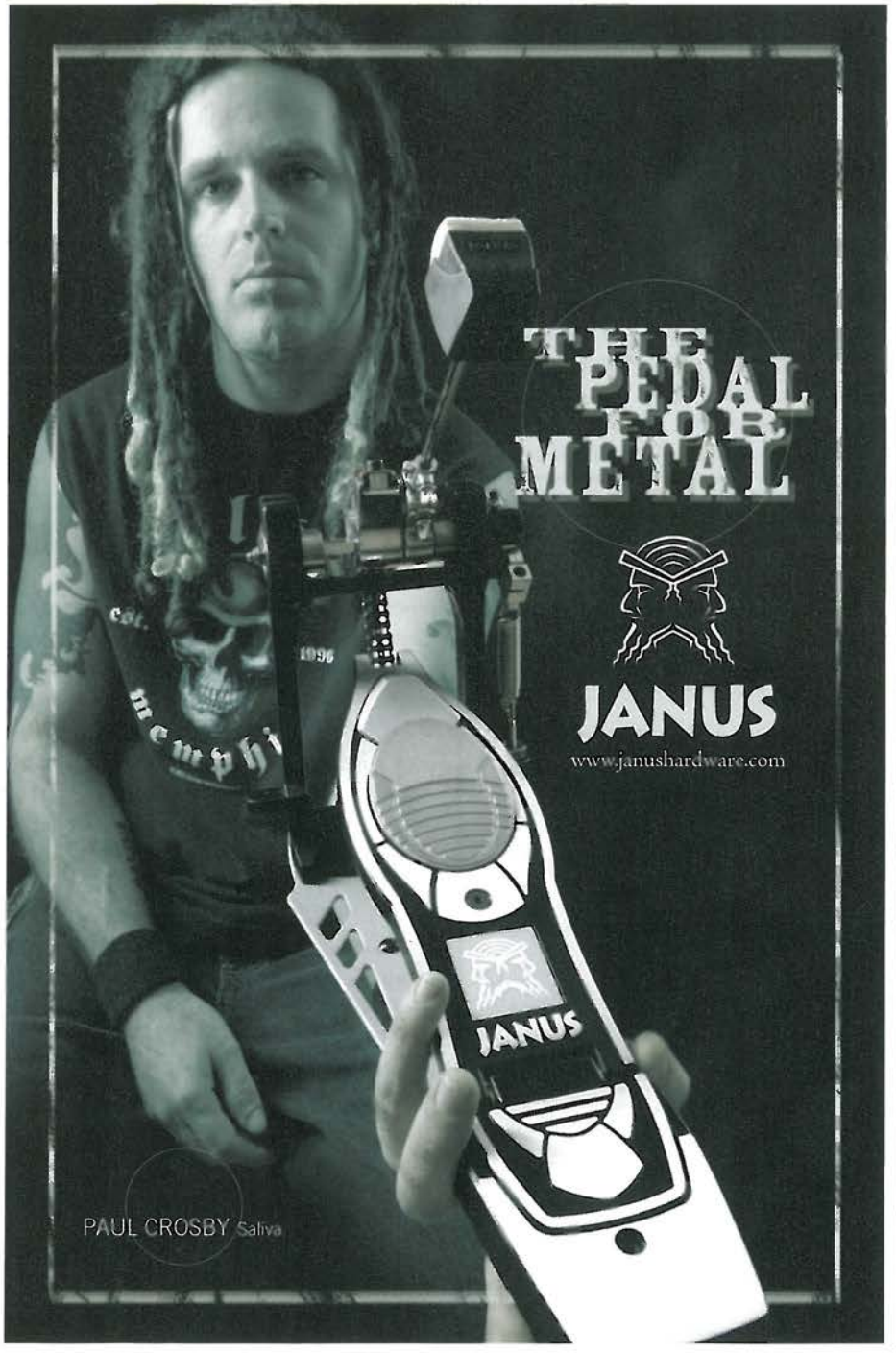
When miking your hi-hat and cymbals, look for low-cost condenser microphones. Rode makes a fantastic affordable stereo condenser mic' called the NT4. I love to use this for my overheads. An added plus with this mic' is that you only need to use one mic' stand positioned directly overhead. I found the smaller footprint beneficial in a small space.

Now that the basics are covered, let's have some fun. Though I love big roomy sounds, I also love unusual, lo-fi drum sounds. PZM microphones are great for this. These mic's are "plates" that you can lay on the floor or tape to the walls. This will give you a nice stereo room sound. On several tweaker songs, such as "truth is," I would place an AKG 414 mic' in the bathroom and record with the doors open. I also used any cheap mic' I could borrow. I would place these in random spots throughout the room, or in the hallway, just to see what it would sound like.

Remember not to over-think this process, worrying about how "bad" it might sound if you do something unusual. I've stuck mic's inside the oven and under pillows. Once I put a mic' inside a piano in the living room. With the doors open, the drums in the bedroom vibrated the strings and made a creepy, distant sound that worked great with reverb for a song's breakdown section.

In Part 2, we'll patch these mic's into preamps to get levels, experiment with EQ and compression, and examine different ways to sum into your computer. See you then!

Chris Vrenna is the former drummer with Nine Inch Nails. He has also produced tracks for several top acts, he's written and recorded the music to a popular video game, and he leads his own band, tweaker. Recently Chris filled in for an injured Ginger Fish on a Marilyn Manson tour.



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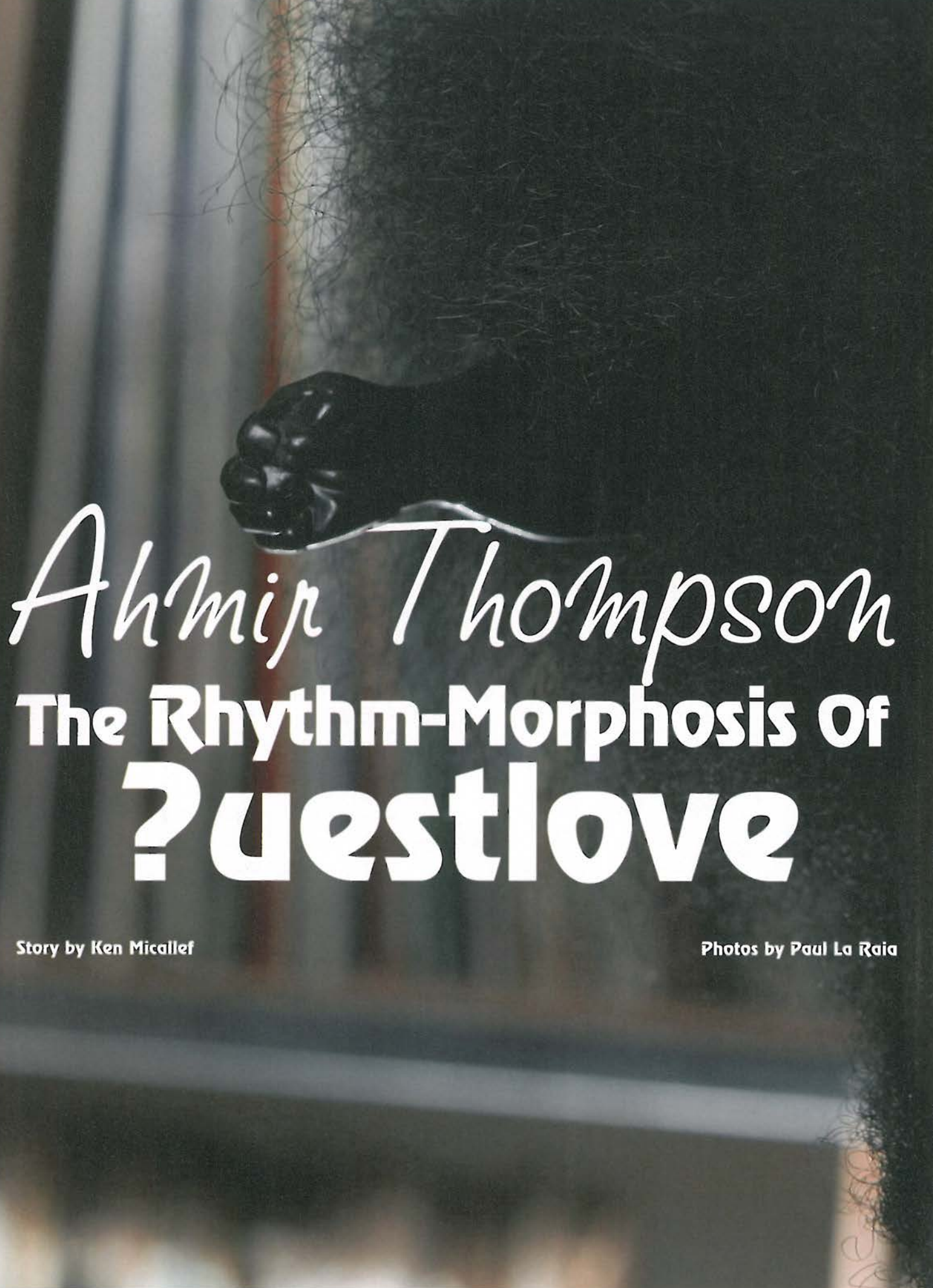
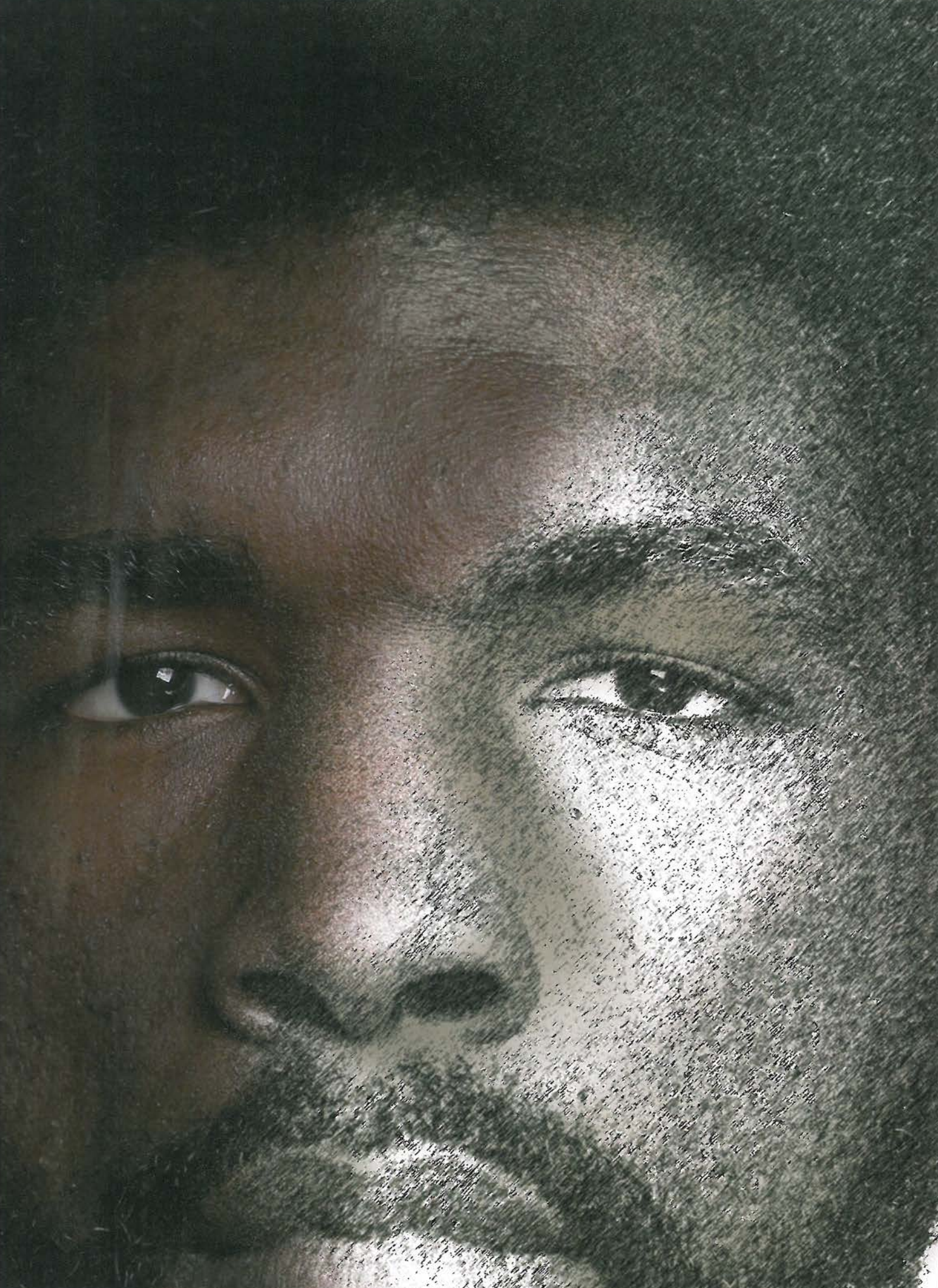


Ahmir Thompson

The Rhythm-Morphosis Of ?uestlove

Story by Ken Micallef

Photos by Paul La Raia



Ahmir-Khalib Thompson is occupying his favorite position. Seated at a Digidesign mixing desk in his Philadelphia studio (called "The Studio"), Thompson is as excited as a kid in a candy store. Today's confection, courtesy of Sony Records, is the original master tapes of Sly & The Family Stone's "Everybody Is A Star," which Thompson and his band, The Roots, sampled for the opening track of their recent hip-hop opus, *The Tipping Point*.

Sliding faders up and down, Thompson goes through vocal tracks until the only thing you hear is Sly Stone, front and center, crooning for all his life. This is a truly spooky and wonderful experience, like being in a time machine with Ahmir Thompson as your commander. He pulls up more faders: brass and bass kick in, Larry Graham's thunderous voice booms from the speakers. This is not simply for fun—Thompson is also working on a Sly Stone tribute album.

"Tribute records are always pointless," Thompson asserts. "And when someone asked me to do the Sly thing, I knew it could be a disaster. But I was so curious about the drum sound; I really did it because I knew they would send me the masters. They even sent me the original engineer's notes for the session."

Ahmir adjusts the faders that control the chorus. Then, while bringing down the vocals with his left hand, he slides up another fader with his right that exposes a drum track blasting over a tinny '60s-era click. Gregg Errico's drums are a revelation of funky, slapping, shape-shifting patterns. The sound is tight, popping, and well-recorded.

Now the drummer-turned-engineer is beaming. Ahmir plays the master of The Isley Brothers' 1973 hit "That

Roots Gear

Drums: Yamaha Absolute Maple Nouveau in Apple Fade sparkle finish

A. 5½x14 snare (with wood hoops)
B. 3½x14 snare (David Garibaldi signature model)
C. 16x18 floor tom
D. 18x22 bass drum (occasionally switching to either 16x18 or 18x24)

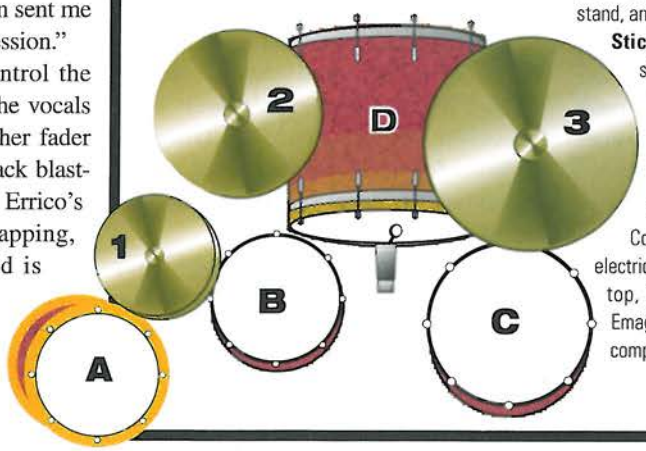
Cymbals: Zildjian

1. 14" A hi-hats (A paper-thin crash top, A Zildjian & Cie Vintage crash bottom)
2. 20" Oriental Crash Of Doom
3. 24" K Constantinople light ride

Hardware: all Yamaha, including an FP-9310 Flying Dragon double-chain foot pedal, a DS-1100 hydraulic drum throne, an SS-840 snare stand, an HS-950 hi-hat stand, and two CS-840 cymbal stands

Sticks: Vic Firth Ahmir "?uestlove" Thompson signature model (hickory with wood tip, similar to 7A)

Studio Gear: 1960s Kustom 8 SRM eight-track board, Digidesign, Focusrite, ProTools, 24-track board, Akai MPC 2000XL, Pioneer CDJ100 CD Scratch, MultiVox MX20, Electric Combo piano, Korg Triton, Fender Rhodes 73, electric piano, toy glockenspiel, Apple Mac G4 laptop, Technics tables, Pioneer DJM500 mixer, Emagic Unitor Eight MIDI Interface, Avalon VT727 compressor (in rack), kalimba



Lady (Part 1)." He brings up Ernie Isley's walloping, gut-bucket groove. The drumming is frenetic but deep, even if Isley's drums sound like cardboard boxes being struck with flyswatters. The groove is raw and in the pocket as Isley hums along to his own rhythm.

But Ahmir isn't satisfied. He searches for the hi-hats in the track. "Listen," he says. "You can hear all the nuances—everything is in the stereo mix. And you can hear him singing! I like the fact that he's singing the rhythm. I couldn't find a click, though, and I doubt there is one."

Surrounded by '70s analog recording gear as well as state-of-the-art digital, Thompson is in his element. In the adjacent record room, 3,000 LPs are arranged on ten shelves that wrap around the small space like books in a massive library. The LPs are all ordered and categorized, small paper tags reading Funkadelic, Aretha, Stevie Wonder, Sly, Gil Scott-Heron, James Brown, Beatles, Neptunes, Mr. T's *Be Somebody*, Oldies LPs, Country, '60s, Jazz, and Blues. The bottom shelf is devoted to hip-hop 12"s labeled by year from 1979 to present. The opposite end of the room holds the tools of his trade, including a gorgeous Yamaha kit along with a few guitars and basses. Another room at the studio, the main room, houses everything from recording gear and Erykah Badu and Roots platinum records to '50s-era vintage bass drums and some ancient Kohn and Champion snare drums.

If you haven't guessed, Ahmir "?uestlove" Thompson is much more than a drummer. One of the most in-demand producers on the planet since Joss Stone's debut went triple platinum, Ahmir Thompson is a one-man production industry, the wise man behind The Roots' success (his historical knowledge and commentary fills their liner notes), as well as a key player in the neo-soul movement that has launched the ascent of such R&B icons as Erykah Badu, Jill Scott, D'Angelo, Common, India.Arie, and Joss Stone.

More recently, Thompson appeared with Jay-Z in the concert documentary *Fade To Black*, and he produced two projects, Detroit hip-hop collective Slum Village's *Fantastic, Vol. 2*, and the soundtrack to director Michael Mann's thriller *Collateral*. Tracks for Justin Timberlake, Macy Gray, and Christina Aguilera have also raised Ahmir's profile (and no doubt his hourly rate) even further.

But it all comes down to Ahmir's top-tight, bottom-heavy groove. Whether playing with Eminem, John Mayer, or the Neo-Soul Stars, Ahmir has mastered the art of replicating the breakbeat on an acoustic set. With D'Angelo's *Voodoo* album, heads were bobbing even more than usual to Ahmir's beat, leaving most listeners wondering, "Is that a sample or a live drummer?"

Ahmir's sleight-of-sticks magic is all over *The Tipping Point*. On some tracks his beats sound like scratched-up Clyde Stubblefield—a ten-ton groove a millisecond behind the beat. And his extremely cool production techniques are evident throughout.

His alter ego may be ?uestlove, but for pure drumming style with an experimental soul, Ahmir Thompson has all the answers.

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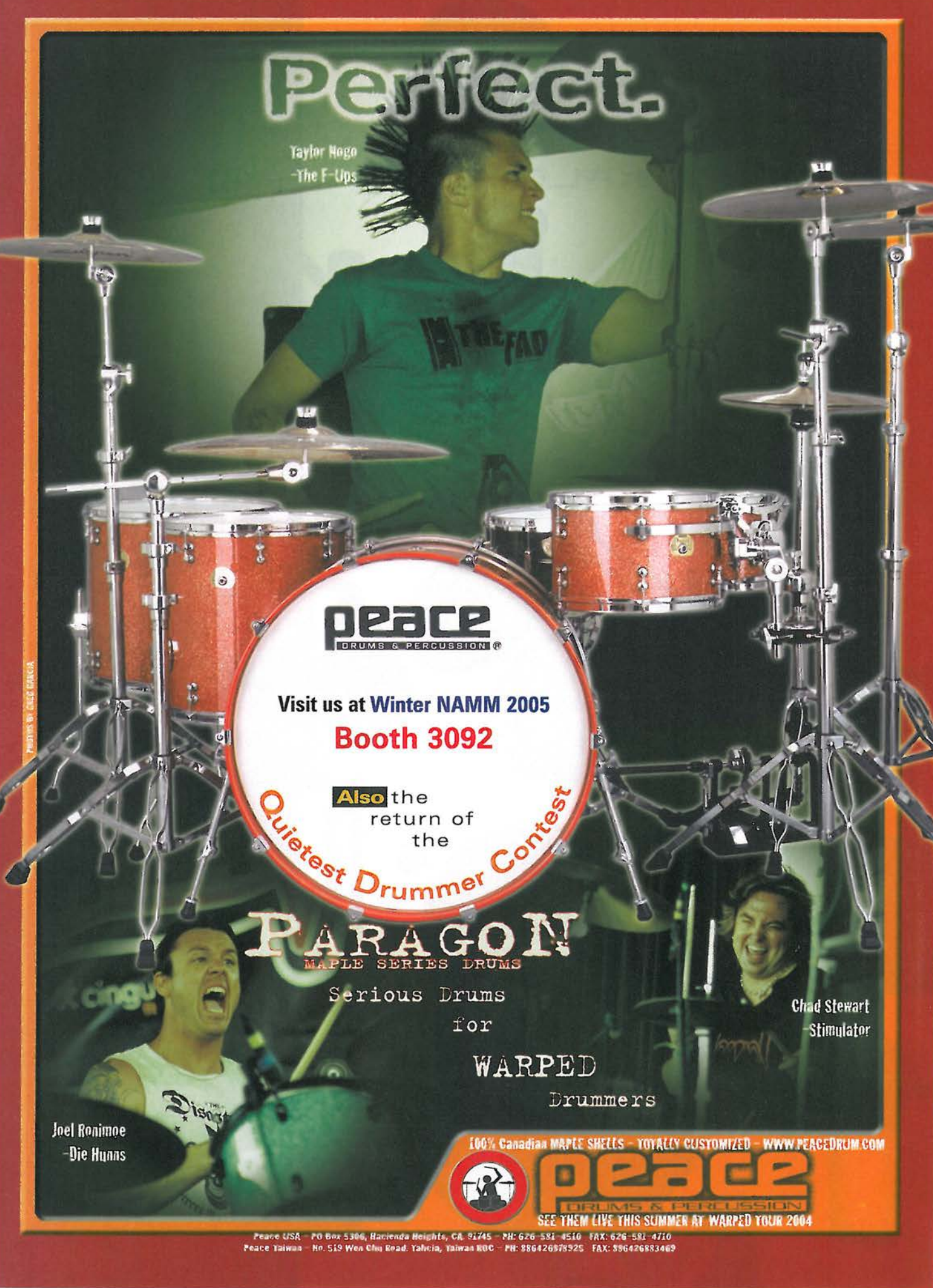
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"I was a freak about getting the texture of the drum sound to be just like it was back in the day."

MD: Your drum sound is a constant: a massive bass drum, a tight, popping snare, and silky hi-hats that are just a little recessed in the mix. How did you develop your signature sound?

Ahmir: It really depends on what I want to establish for myself in a particular year. I'm now into the fourteenth year of my metamorphosis, or my rhythmmorphosis. The development of the sound starts back in 1992. Back then, The Roots had officially started recording and I was in the studio dealing with a lot of different aspects of the music, as opposed to just playing drums. By that point I had to take twenty-one years of knowledge I had about drumming and decide which direction I wanted to go in.

Philadelphia drummers are pretty much known for their gospel-style drumming, so that's in the mix. I also grew up with my father's massive record collection of 3,000 LPs. [Ahmir played in his father's doo-wop review band.] But I was always attracted to a gritty, dirty drum sound, a very imperfect drum sound.

MD: The drums on your records don't always sound like that.

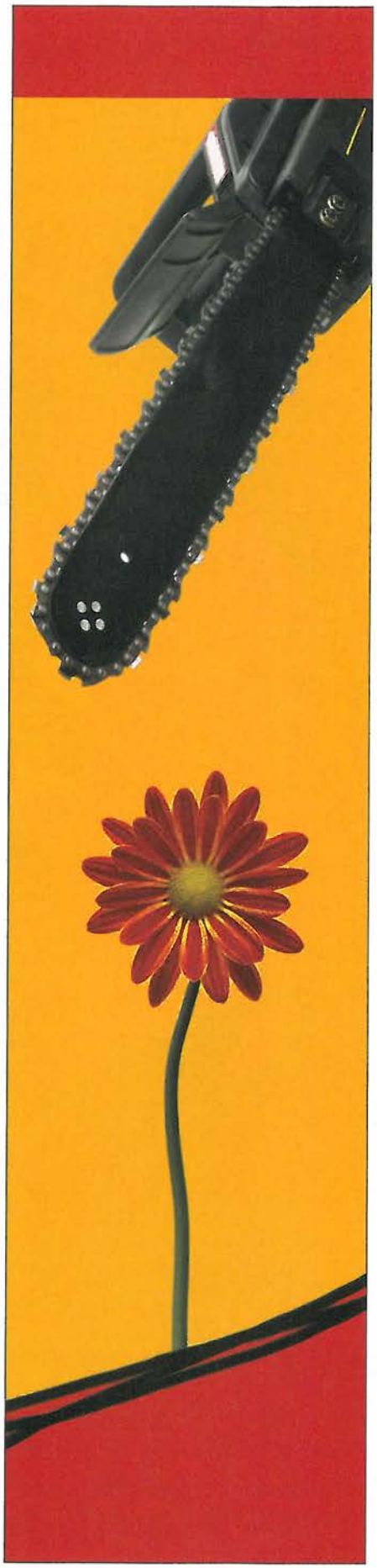
Ahmir: In 1992, my style was more about finding myself. I was influenced by groups that were sampling the breaks that I grew up on. Progressive groups like A Tribe Called Quest and Pete Rock, as well as De La Soul were looking past the James Browns and the George Clintons. They were bringing in samples of Reuben Wilson, Billy Barron, Les McCann, Cannonball Adderley, and Gary Burton. DJ culture is really obsessed with samples. Nerds are obsessed with how things get made. The science is more important to them than the final product. But all of that influenced my drumming.

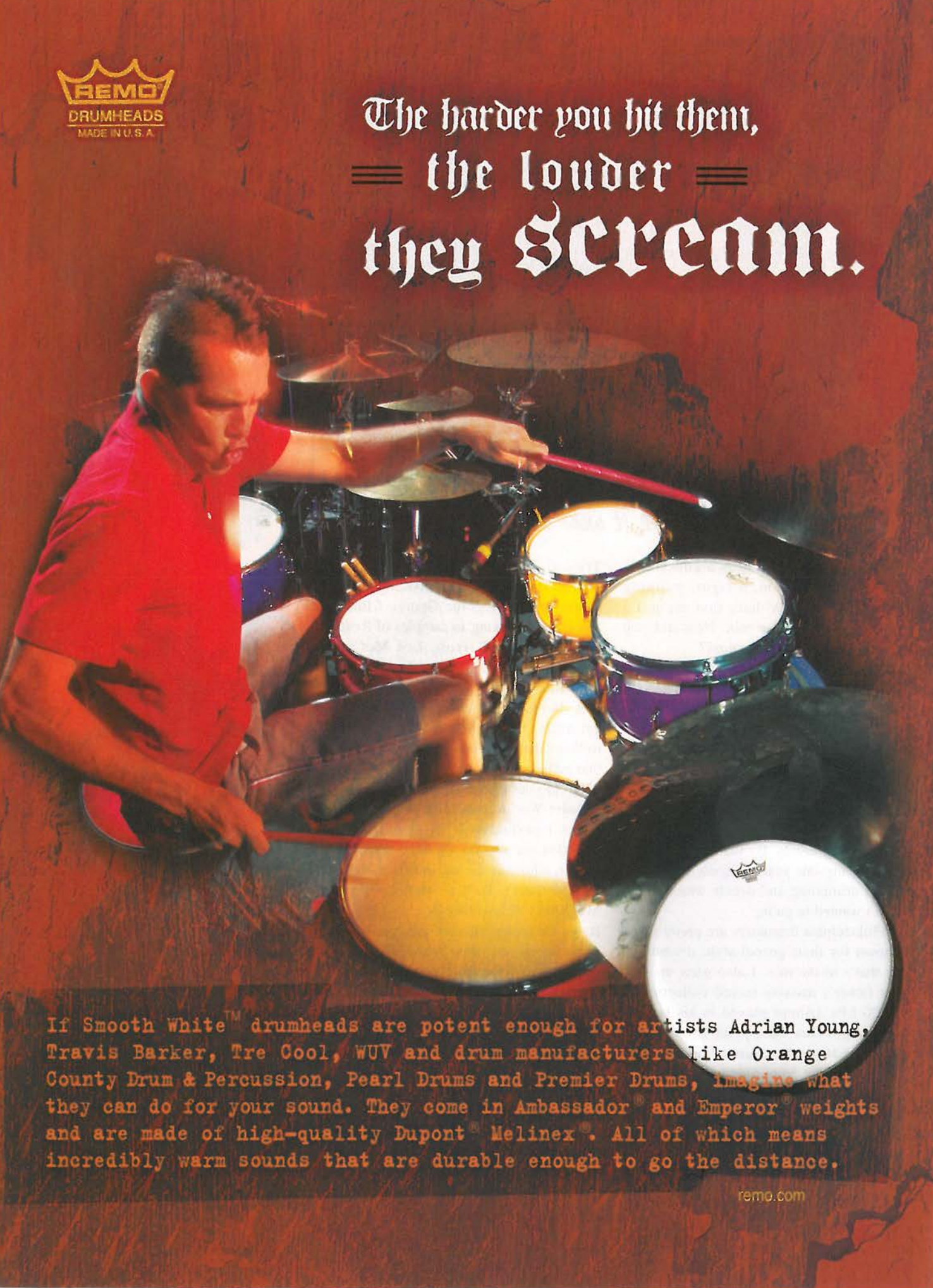
MD: So your goal early on....

Ahmir: Was to sound like those breaks. I guess I perfected it by '94. Once we recorded our second album, I found Bob Power, who was the engineer for A Tribe Called Quest, De La Soul, D'Angelo, Me'Shell NdegéOcello, and Erykah Badu. He taught me new methods of miking and mixing the drums. Up to that point I had depended on using one mic' for that '70s sound.

MD: On *The Tipping Point*, which has some extreme drum sounds, were you a freak for vintage mic's and placement?

Ahmir: I am utterly obsessed with it. I was a freak about getting the texture of the drum sound to be just like it was back in the day. But then I figured it was virtually impossible when you're working with modern technology.

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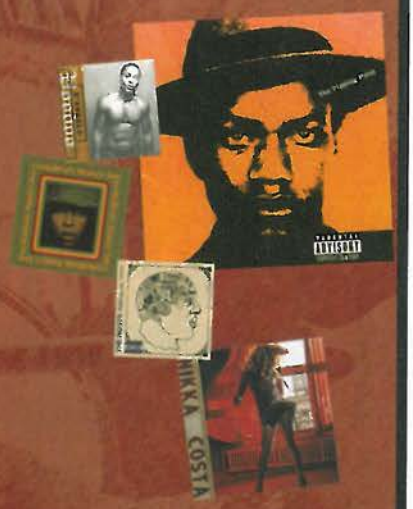
Thompson's Most Terrific

Recordings

Artist	Album
The Roots	The Tipping Point
The Roots	Things Fall Apart
The Roots	Illadelph Halflife
The Roots	Do You Want More?!!!??!
The Roots	The Roots Come Alive
The Roots	Phrenology
The Philadelphia Experiment	The Philadelphia Experiment
D'Angelo	Voodoo
Erykah Badu	Mama's Gun
Common	Like Water For Chocolate
Jay Z	Fade To Black
Nikka Costa	Everybody Got Their Something



Favorites

Artist	Album	Drummer
James Brown	In The Jungle Groove	Clyde Stubblefield, Jabo Starks
Average White Band	Person To Person (Live)	Steve Ferrone
Slum Village	Fantastic, Vol. 2	Jay Dee (programmer)
Miles Davis	Nefertiti	Tony Williams
Prince	Parade	Prince, Sheila E
Stevie Wonder	Songs In The Key Of Life	Raymond Pounds, Greg Brown, Stevie Wonder
Stevie Wonder	Music Of My Mind	Stevie Wonder

MD: Can't you just get all the old analog gear?

Ahmir: We did that. A majority of the records that I'm known for—my streak of The Roots' *Phrenology*, Common's *Like Water For Chocolate*, Erykah Badu's *Mama's Gun*, De'Angelo's *Voodoo*, and Slum Village's *Fantastic*—all came out in 2000. Most of them were recorded at Electric Lady studios with sixty percent of the vintage recording equipment that's been in use there since 1969. And the engineer for those records, Russell Alevado, is beyond obsessive with recording equipment. He won't let me use Pro Tools. On "Water," from *Phrenology*, where we go crazy for fourteen minutes, he did all of that on two 2" reel machines. He's that obsessive.

MD: What did you do personally for your sound? Was it something like, "I'm going to sound exactly like Clyde Stubblefield?"

Ahmir: That's hard. When you hear Stubblefield, you think that he's hitting with massive power strokes. It wasn't until I saw a James Brown concert video and got to watch Clyde's left-hand technique that I could see how soft he played. He was barely moving his wrist.

When we did our fourth album, *Things Fall Apart*, we were recording at Sigma in Philadelphia, and the chief engineer for all those Gamble & Huff and T.S.O.P. records, Joe Tarsia, walked by the studio. He asked me, "Do you want to mike it the way we did back in the day?" He went into the closet and came back with a blanket and covered my whole drumset with it. He said, "This is how I made 'Backstabbers' [The O'Jays], 'When Will I See You Again' [Three Degrees], and 'Bad Luck' [The Spinners]." He told me to play my drums with all the blankets on them and as softly as I could. It was like some Star Wars thing. We recorded that way on "Dynamite!" on *Things Fall Apart*. I was trying to approximate this very dry snare sound that was on a demo from a programmed beat.

One of the problems of being in a hip-hop band, where other people give you outside production to emulate, is that occasionally the emcee can be married to the demo. Once you have to play it and put your feel on it, the sound changes,

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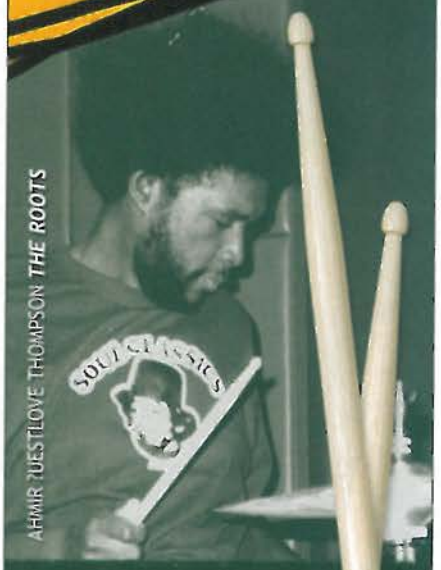

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and that can be problematic. My job is twelve times as hard because I have to approximate a demo of an outside beat. But Joe told me to just play softly and that would give me the best sound. That's the sound of the '70s. They weren't allowed to hit hard because it would overdrive the compression. That's the sound of raw soul. So I started doing that, and ever since then I've been like the black Charlie Watts.

MD: Even on "The Miles Hit," from *The Philadelphia Experiment* record, your drumming can sound subtle and laid back. The bass drum is slamming but the snare is like David Garibaldi. It's almost a drum 'n' bass track.

Ahmir: *The Philadelphia Experiment* record is the last one where I used that lighter approach. By that point, I'd been doing it for four years. As for the drum 'n' bass thing, that's me being obsessed with Clyde Stubblefield's left hand. His break on James Brown's "Soul Pride" is a killer. What "Funky Drummer" is to hip-hop, "Soul Pride" is to drum 'n' bass enthusiasts.

For that record I used smaller 12" piccolo snares. In fact, I don't really like bigger snare drums. I had a Yamaha Steve Jordan cocktail kit, which has a 10" snare—it sounds like a rimshot. So when I do drum 'n' bass, that's what I use, but I keep my same kick. By then, Yamaha had made me a gargantuan 26" bass drum for the D'Angelo *Voodoo* tour. And I used it for *Phrenology* and *The Philadelphia Experiment*. I had established the tight snare sound but felt that I was getting resistance from musicians. I was getting known as a breakbeat drummer and not a real drummer.

MD: But back then in hip-hop there weren't many real drummers anyway.

Ahmir: There was only Bobby Simmons from Stetsasonic. But the problem with the position I'm in, whether it's production, The Roots, or as a drummer, is that we've built our own island. Either we win by default or there's no one else to compare us to.

MD: Why haven't more bands followed in The Roots' footsteps?

Ahmir: Discovering music in your formative years is not as big an issue as it was back when I was going to Performing Arts High School. I remember that my first homework assignment was to purchase Stevie Wonder's *Songs In The Key Of Life*. Music appreciation was on a whole 'nother level back then.

We're now in this position where we're the only black band with a major recording deal. That's frightening. I grew up on The Commodores, War, and Mandrell, and I knew all their names. It's funny, but I talk to all those cats, and they've said things to me like, "Imagine being a band in 1983 and you have a keyboard player who can program the drums." Next thing you know, the album would be done and the drummer wouldn't be on the recording. A lot of groups lost their mojo that way. It's like outsourcing today. One day people are going to wake up and realize that this is the slow burn to hell.

MD: Let's talk about *The Tipping Point*. What was the miking process for that?

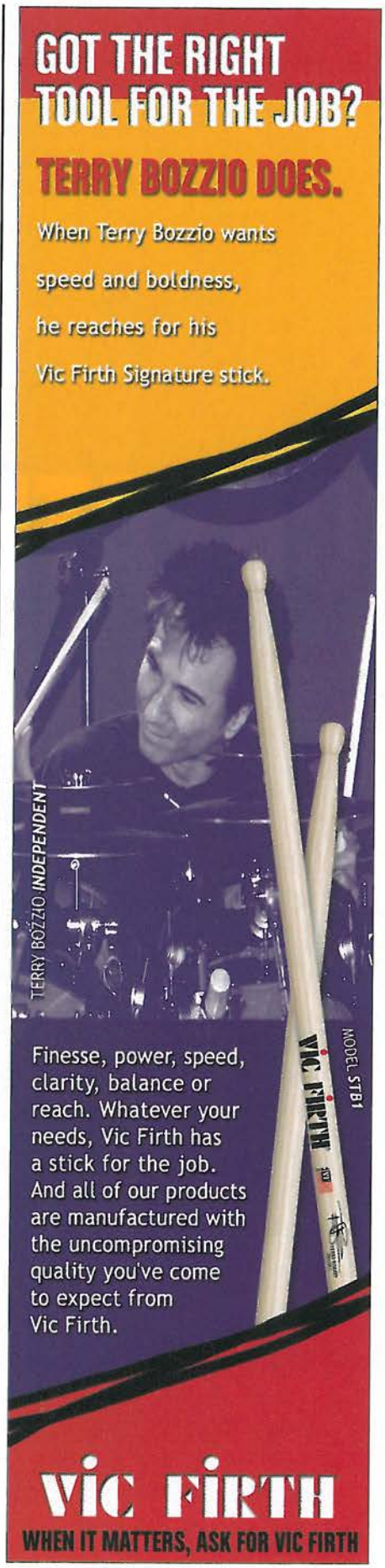
Ahmir: I always do close-miking—as tight as possible. We use a small room in my studio. You can barely fit one person in it. That's where I recorded "Guns Are Drawn," "Star," and "Somebody's Got To Do It." I love a tight sound.

I did a lot of trial-and-error in that room. I had to make do with what I had. I figured that back in the day there were no options. Just a few mic's and eight tracks. I have minimalist equipment, so I thought that perhaps I could create the same sound. I didn't want to upgrade; I wanted something very dry. But this was the hardest record for me to approximate sounds.

MD: There are many different drum sounds on the record. Generally are the drums wide open, taped up, or effected later on in the mixing process?

Ahmir: I chose to tape them up, blanket them up, and T-shirt them up. I want the driest sound possible. To the naked ear, it won't sound like that, which is why I don't like my band around when I'm recording my drum parts. It will never sound like what I have in my head for the final product.

There is such a meticulous process we have to do in order to get a particular sound. For "Guns Are Drawn," getting that dirty sound was so hard with today's technology. We had to lay it down in the room first, process it on our SSL J9000



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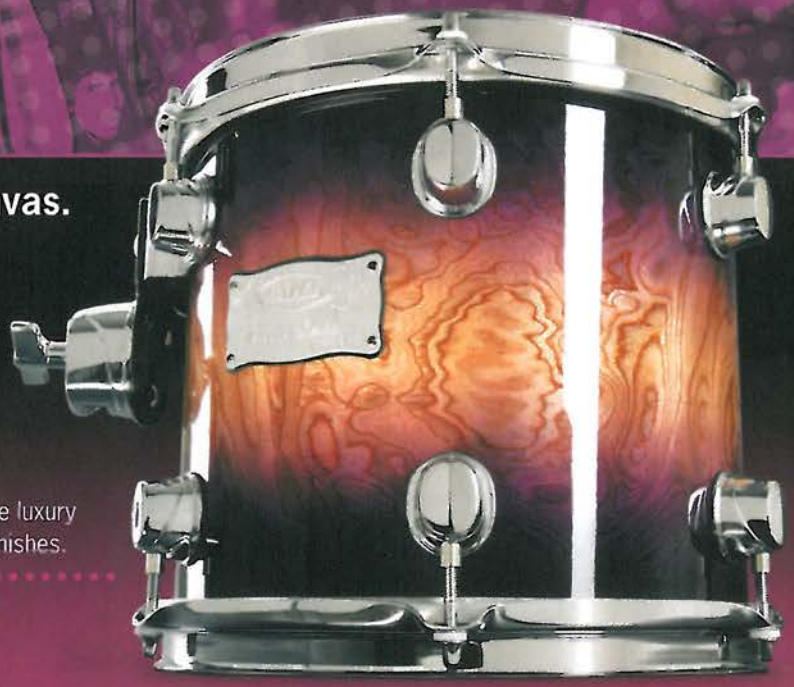

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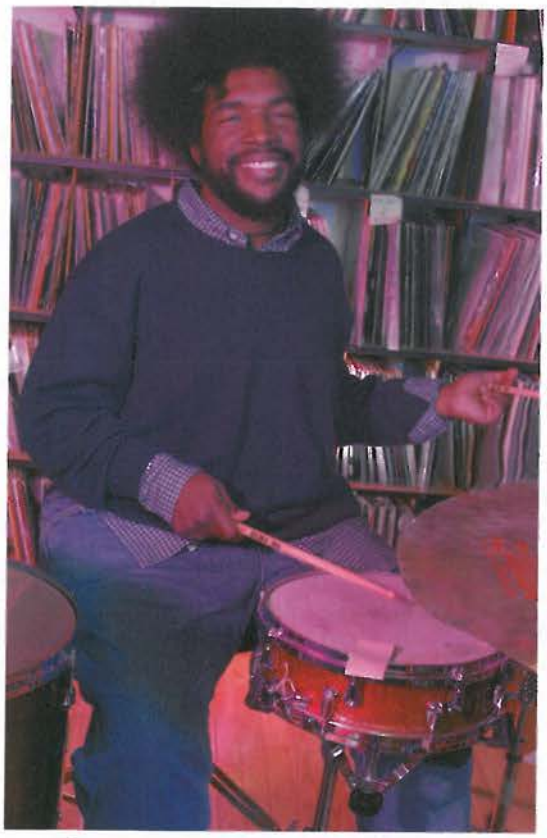
board through guitar amps and a Line 6 Amp Farm, and we used lots of different vintage mic's. That song took three days. "Boom" is probably the first song that ever took me more than a week to master. That was based on "Soul Pride."

MD: The drums sound surreal on "Boom," like Stubblefield meets Jimi Hendrix.

Ahmir: I wanted to master Stubblefield's sound and style, but then I wanted to take it further and make it dirtier. We did have one mix with natural drums, but we made it dirtier so that people wouldn't think it was me.



"I found out that I got more attention by playing simply and in the pocket than when I was trying to bring attention to myself by playing fills."

Sometimes when you don't understand something, you tend to have ignorance about it. I was doing a session with Lenny Kravitz in 2000. He's his best drummer, and I am a drummer, but I'm also an obsessive engineer. I went to his studio and there was his Pro Tools rig. I thought he was "Mr. Analog." He said, "One day I decided it was a quicker process to do Pro Tools." I said, "What about the old sounds and tube gear?" He said, "If Jimi Hendrix were alive, he would have invented Pro Tools." Once I heard that, I took three days and really focused on Pro Tools to see what it could do. I found that I could experiment with it and do it very quickly. Then while we were working on *The Roots Come Alive,* our engineer showed me different plug-in sounds. So the sky's the limit now.

MD: So you used a combination of Pro Tools effects. Did you get that raw through-the-amp sound and then affect it with Pro Tools?

Ahmir: We started that guitar effect trick on D'Angelo's *Voodoo* record. It's one thing to put my experiments on The Roots' albums, but it's a whole 'nother thing to be the co-star on someone else's project. That was one of the riskier R&B albums. It was so dark and murky, I started to get worried. Does anyone play rimclicks for a whole record? He wanted me to do a whole album of rimclicks, and he wanted it to sound different every time.

MD: What do you use for a click track when recording?

Ahmir: I wasn't using a click at first, and I was secretly blamed for DJs' resistance to our records. It was hard to blend our records because allegedly my time was fluctuating. Once we started recording *Illadelph Halflife* I tried the traditional cowbell click, but because I was so on it, it was really hard to concentrate and I was losing my soul. So now I take a drum machine and program whatever song it is in polka time. If you're going to do a traditional

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four on the floor beat, and you program a click that's also four on the floor, you're playing right on top of it so you can't hear it. I want to relax, I don't want to panic. So normally I program a beat that is the exact opposite of what I'm playing. If it's a soul groove, I'll program something that is double that.

MD: Do you ever loop yourself?

Ahmir: Sometimes I do sample myself. For *The Tipping Point,* we took the Wav. files of jam sessions and gave them to different programmers. Our producer took my drums and looped me for "Don't Say Nuthin'" and "Duck Down!" And for "Why (What's Goin On?)," I looped myself for eight bars. If I had more ego I'd say, "People need to know I'm a drummer and that I played every note. I want to be an example to the children." But really, I am on my own island.

To really do what I do, I have to put my ego away. You can't do triple-roll fills or some fancy thing, which is really all about, "Hey look! I am playing! Look at me!" I found out that I got more attention by playing simply and in the pocket than when I was trying to bring attention to myself by playing fills. Occasionally some smartass will come on my Okay Player Web site [www.okayplayer.com] and say, "You're not better than Lil' John Roberts." But I feel that I've carved out my own niche. I'm holding the torch for breakbeat drumming, which I feel is an impeccable art form.

MD: I've read that one of your favorite tracks is "Double Trouble," from *Things Fall Apart*. That song has so many drum sounds.

Ahmir: That was the first time I discovered how to get a gritty, dirty sound. I'm obsessed with gritty breakbeat sounds. George Clinton says that the definition of funk is having some hamhocks in your cornflakes. That's what I was looking for. Hamhock is the meat that soul food aficionados use to spice up their collard greens to give it some flavor. Cornflakes represent America, hamhocks represent the black or soul spice.

MD: The blackness in your whiteness.

Ahmir: Exactly. I always had an idea how I wanted it to sound in my head, but I couldn't translate what I was hearing to the engineers. So I asked to be left alone for three hours, and they showed me how to use the SSL board and a Yamaha effects unit. So in the eleventh hour I found a very compressed, no-highs sound. Eureka! It was my first song where I sounded like the breakbeat drummers I'd been emulating all my life. Ever since then I've been obsessed with dirty drums—that is, if the song calls for it.

"Sacrifice," off of *Phrenology*, has a very poppy, clean sound. I had a hard time convincing the engineers that we needed something that had a normal, clean sound. It took us twice as long to figure out how to make it sound regular.

MD: And you also like your performance on Erykah Badu's tune "A.D. 2000," from *Mama's Gun*?

Ahmir: I had a Stevie Wonder vibe in mind for that. I'm the champion of drummers who have absolutely juvenile technique. Stevie drums from his soul. Listen to "Love Having You Around" from *Music Of My Mind*. He would do individual tracks, one at a time. That's really hard to do. He would program a beat off of a Mellotron [imitates rhythm box sound], and then play each part of the set individually. If you're only hitting the kick by itself, you're going to put all of your passion into it, as opposed to multitasking snare, hi-hat, and kick. I always wondered why Stevie played like his life depended on it. Listen to "All Day Sucker." And I wanted a damn-near gong sound on my cymbals because of the way Stevie Wonder's cymbals sounded.

MD: When you hit the cymbals, it's always a statement.

Ahmir: I choose to use them as an exclamation point. I don't like doing fills too much. Have I ever done a fill on a record?

MD: That makes me ask, why no mounted tom? You had one early on.

Ahmir: You want the real story, or my story?

MD: Both!

Ahmir: My story is that I am a disciplined drummer and I want to keep it in the pocket. The real story? I met Elvin Jones in London at the Jazz Café and he too had a very minimalist drumkit. In '94 I was doing the Neil Peart trip—a million drums. I saw Elvin's setup, and he was playing like his life depended on it. Elvin had a snare, a tom, and a floor, and he was playing with so much power. I asked him what the secret was. "Less is more,"

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he whispered. "The fewer drums you have, the quicker you can pack up and find a female." [laughs] I said, "That's it?" "Yeah, man." I was my own roadie then, too, so I went minimal.

MD: But it does make you concentrate on the pocket.

Ahmir: There would be times when I would panic. It would be solo time and I had to get a color out of two drums. It forced me to be inventive. Now I play the shells, the stands, *everything*.

MD: And you get more out of the cymbals. What's the secret to getting so much decay out of the cymbals?

Ahmir: Massive cymbals. And there's a mic' from the '40s that we use that is like a nuclear reactor. You can hear it.

MD: And what's the deal with the snare drum with the wood hoops positioned to the left of your hi-hat?

Ahmir: I love that drum. I had Yamaha make it for me. I wanted a wood-hoop snare with holes in the shell. That fat wood hoop gives me less ring. I normally have to tape up the drums to avoid that resonant sound. If I play any snare drum that's bigger than a piccolo, it just rings all the time. But that drum gives me a very good crack sound. That's the snare I used on "Boom."

MD: Speaking of inventions, you're the master of laying the time right in the crack, that spot where everybody's head is bobbing. What's the key to that?

Ahmir: It's my drunken style. To me, the world's greatest drummer is Jay Dee. He'll never get praise because he's best known for his beat programming, but he *is* a drummer. He's a beat maker for hip-hop records, but he's also so much more than that. He invented the sound we call neo-soul.

MD: He influenced your pocket?

Ahmir: When I first heard his production on *Labcabincalifornia* by The Pharcyde in '95, there is a song on there called "B******t," and the sound is ragged. The kicks were not in line or quantized. After being obsessed with that track, I called Q-Tip, who is Jay Dee's idol, and asked if he programmed the hi-hat and kick and then maybe played the snare live, which Prince does. But Jay Dee said he programmed all of it. I told him that's impossible. It was programmed like a human being. It had dynamic range.

Jay Dee programs his beats for a hundred and twenty-eight bars, where the average producer will do four bars and just loop that. If he screws up, oh well, that's what a human would do. After hearing that, though, my mission switched from wanting to sound like a sample to sounding as sloppy as Jay Dee. All I can say is that it's a drunken style.

MD: Did the Jay Dee approach filter down to your production for Joss Stone's record?

Ahmir: Definitely. That said, I had no clue that record sold three million copies 'til I went to Europe. I was surprised. Nine times out of ten, I prefer working with underdeveloped artists.

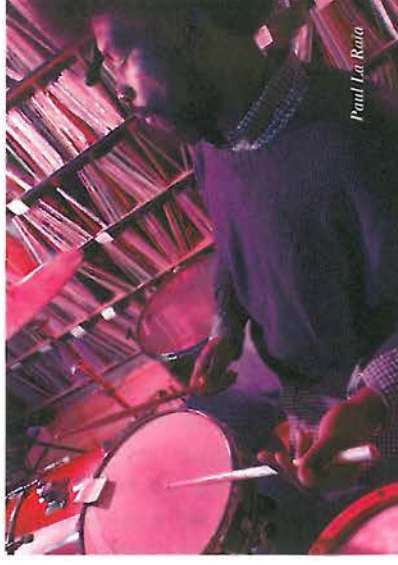
MD: When will you do the Ahmir Thompson solo record? [A mix-tape, *Babies Making Babies*, appeared in 2002.]

Ahmir: I'm too busy to think about that now. And if I had the time, I would rather concentrate on some side projects. I don't want to do that whole "everyone surround me" thing. I feel better when I'm just directing traffic.

MD: What's next for you and The Roots?

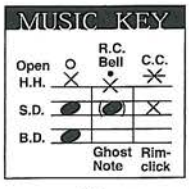
Ahmir: We're in the beginning stages of our eighth album, which is titled *Game Theory* and will be out in July. Because this is our last contractual album with Interscope, I wanted to go full circle and come back to *Do You Want More?*

There is definitely a murky, dark-cloud feeling in the world today, the same thing I was feeling when we recorded *Phrenology*, which we recorded around 9/11. As a band, I feel we're in the hot seat. A lot of people look at The Roots as their political group, but upon closer inspection we've been more apolitical than anything. The idea of selling the group to an audience was hard enough, let alone trying to save the dolphins.


Paul La Roia

?uestlove's Soulful Grooves

by Ed Breckenfeld

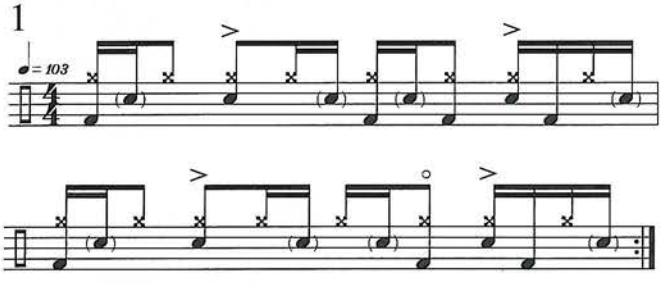


The Roots' latest album, *The Tipping Point*, is further evidence of ?uestlove's king-of-the-hill status in the hip-hop drumming world. The album's grooves virtually defy you to keep still, as ?uestlove propels the songs with his understated yet compelling rhythms. In this special extended *Off The Record*, we'll take a look at some of those grooves, as well as a few from *The Tipping Point*'s predecessor, *Phrenology*, and from ?uestlove's side project, The Philadelphia Experiment.

The Tipping Point

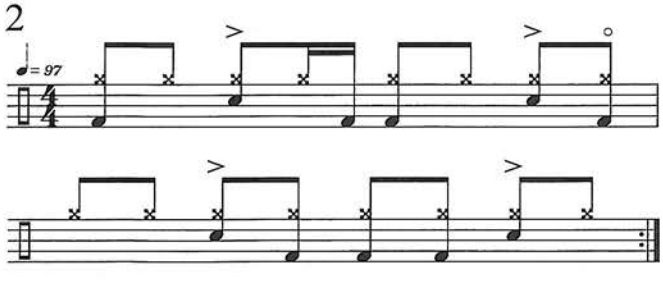
"I Don't Care"

?uestlove strikes the perfect balance between the volume of his ghost notes and the intensity of the backbeat in this groove. The slight change in the bass drum part and the single open hi-hat add interest. (0:00)



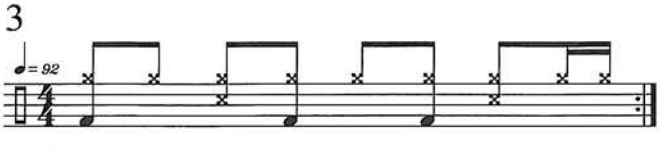
"Guns Are Drawn"

The staccato 8th-note feel of this pattern sets the bed for rapper Black Thought's 16th-note delivery. ?uestlove drops one 16th-note bass drum pickup into the first bar to release the 8th-note tension. (0:03)



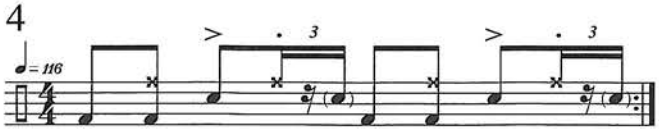
"Stay Cool"

Here's another example of the effectiveness of a relaxed 8th-note beat under a 16th-note rhythmic vocal, with a hint of 16th groove in the hi-hat part. (0:06)



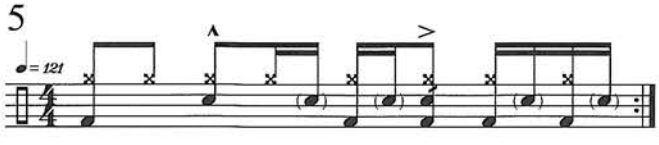
"Web"

The strength of this beat lies in the offbeat ride cymbal pattern (with every other note landing on the bell), combined with swung ghost notes. If this groove doesn't make you bob your head, you've got problems. (0:00)



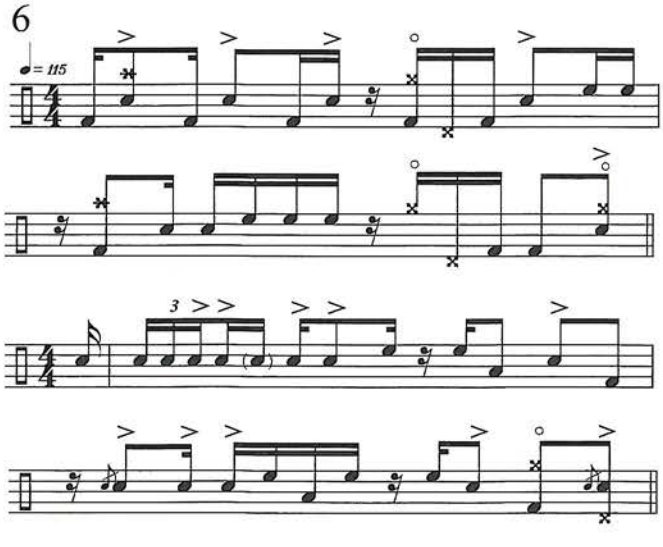
"Boom!"

The Clyde Stubblefield-inspired left-hand work is the key to this incredible beat. ?uestlove combines the rimshot on beat 2 with a flurry of ghost notes and a well-placed accented drag. (0:18)



"Why (What's Goin' On?)"

Near the end of the album, a freestyle drums and vocal jam ensues, giving ?uestlove a chance to bring some licks to the table. Here are a couple of cool sequences. (10:11 and 10:19)

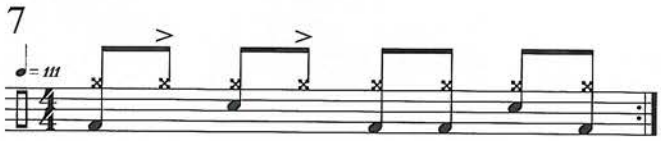


Phrenology

"The Seed"

The accented hi-hats elevate this driving drumbeat. (1:11)

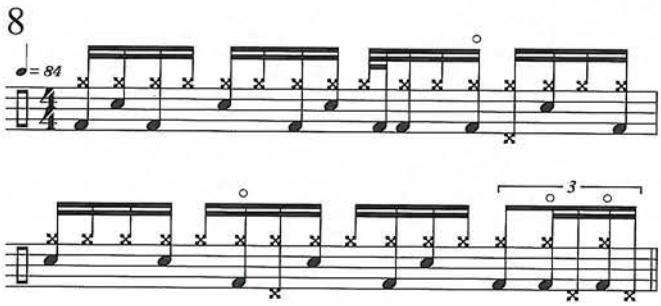
7



"Break You Off"

The end of this single explodes into a great drum 'n' bass–style section, with ?uestlove pushing the boundaries of syncopated drumming. (4:58)

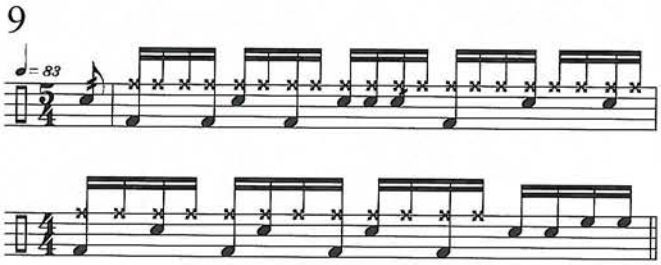
8



"Something In The Way Of Things (In Town)"

Here's more syncopation, this time in a free-flowing ride cymbal groove with a jazzier flavor. (2:05)

9



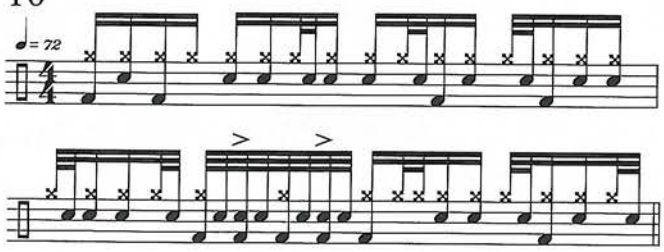
For more on *Phrenology*, see *Off The Record* in the July 2003 issue of *Modern Drummer*.

The Philadelphia Experiment

"Philadelphia Experiment"

?uestlove employs his drum 'n' bass chops in the opening track from this jazz/funk release. Note his slick left-hand snare drum work. (0:55)

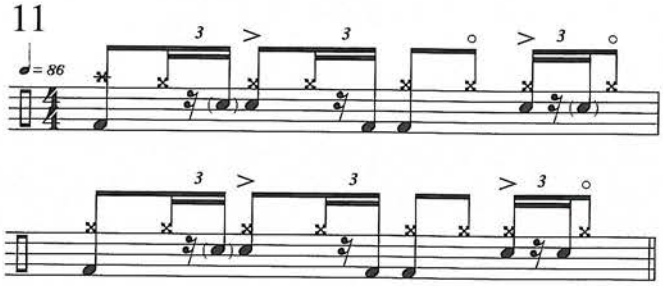
10



"Grover"

There's more left-hand magic in the placement of the swung ghost notes in this smooth groove. (0:14)

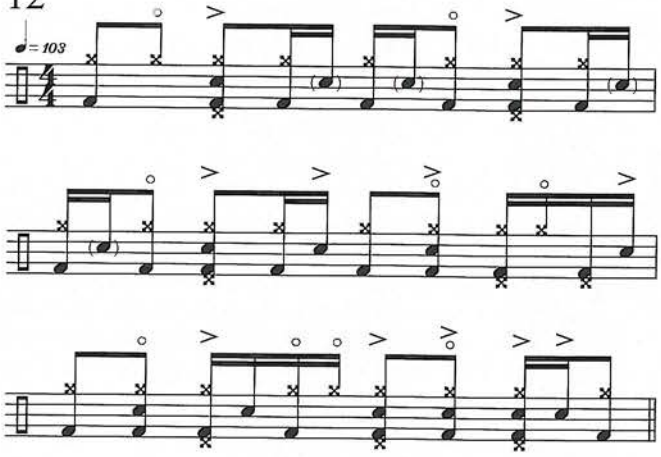
11



"Call For All Demons"

This one's all about open and closed hi-hats, with ?uestlove weaving them in and out of the turned-around drumbeat. (2:45)

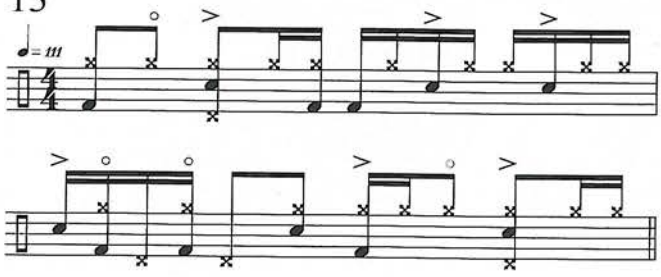
12



"Ain't It The Truth"

This album gives ?uestlove plenty of opportunity to stretch out and improvise on great funk patterns, like this one. (1:05)

13



You can contact Ed Breckenfeld at www.edbreckenfeld.com.

Starclassic Performer

Jeremy Colson

On Control, Punch, and a Punk Perspective in Instrumental Rock

Yes, Jeremy Colson does play with Steve Vai, one of the biggest names in the history of instrumental rock. But, no, he doesn't play with one of the big kits historically associated with instrumental rock. "The styles of music that have influenced me the most—metal and punk—are where you go more for a 4pc kit," explains Jeremy. "If I had a 30pc kit I'd want to hit every drum. That would take away from the foundation of what my job is: keep the groove solid so the other guys can do their solos and know where 'the one' is. If everyone in the band is going off playing a lot of notes, it's hard for the audience to move to the music."

But there are times when Jeremy does have to play a lot of notes. Continues Colson: "On certain technical sections of Vai songs, I have to follow his notes on the toms so I need drums with control. The birch shells have punch AND control. That control is also important for the bigger drum sizes I prefer. Big drums usually need muffling or super thick heads. That takes away from your sound. But with the Performers, I don't need to do that—the drums sound great live or in the studio. They're really easy to tune and they stay in tune. My 18 x 24 is literally the best sounding kick in the world and birch snare has as much crack as a metal drum, but with more control and tone. The drums are just awesome."

Starclassic Performer 100% birch drums are now available in the new 4pc kit configuration featuring a thunderous 18 x 24" bass drum, as well as by individual order in over 26 different sizes.

SP424EAZ 4pc Kit w/hardware (cymbals not included)

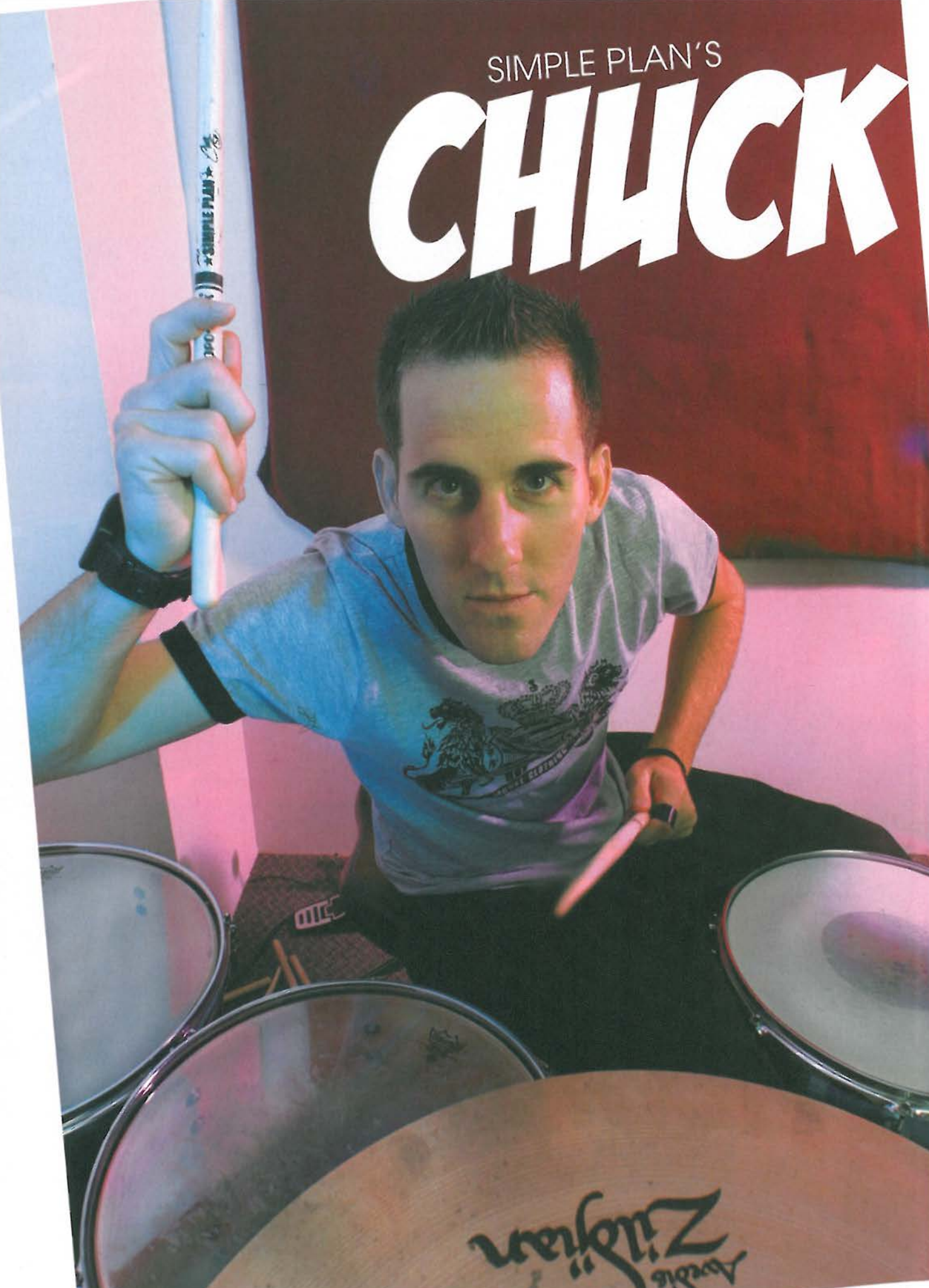
- 18 x 24" bass drum without tom holder mount
- 9 x 12" tom tom
- 16 x 16" floor tom
- 6.5 x 14" snare drum

Starclassic Performer painted drums are now available in 11 super high gloss finishes including the new Red Sparkle Fade and Blue Galaxy Fade finishes.

Hear Jermey Colson and his Starclassic Performer drums on the upcoming release from Steve Vai, *Real Illusions: Reflections*. Instores February 22, 2005.

SIMPLE PLAN'S

CHUCK



COMEAU

Writing From The Drums

"I don't want to let anyone down at the magazine, but I'm not a very technical drummer," Chuck Comeau explains, while chatting it up with *Modern Drummer* in the posh lobby of the Westin New York hotel in Midtown Manhattan. "I never took a lesson—well, actually, I took *one*. I should practice a lot more than I do. And I'm not a gear guy."

Despite his modesty, which tends to go slightly overboard (it must be his punk-anti-musician side manifesting itself), Simple Plan's drummer gets the job done quite well when stationed behind his four-piece Drum Workshop kit. For evidence, check out his impressive chops on Simple Plan's platinum-selling 2002 debut album, *No Pads, No Helmets...Just Balls*. And Comeau's dynamic drumming shows even greater depth on the Montreal-based pop-punk group's recently released sophomore effort, *Still Not Getting Any...*, which is leaping out of record store bins just as quickly as its predecessor.

While Comeau downplays his skills, he also admits that playing his instrument "isn't enough." Something *else* matters just as much to him—or sometimes even more. You see, Comeau is a main songwriter for his fun-loving band, and he values the role immensely. "I love playing drums," he insists. "But I also love to be involved in the music and the lyrics. I wouldn't want to be in a band where I wasn't writing. And since I feel passionate about the songwriting, I really go at it on the drums. It's about 'I love this song and I'm gonna give it everything I've got to make it sound great.' We also, as a band, take a lot of pride in our arrangements."

In the case of *Still Not Getting Any...*, Chuck insists that pride burned bright up until the last possible minute. "This record was so full of deadlines," he shares. "Because of the way the schedule worked out, we had to write about ten songs in three months." No wonder things got so heated between Comeau and Simple Plan's other main songwriter, singer Pierre Bouvier. "We did fight a lot," the drummer concedes. "It was often like, 'Dude, I don't know what we're gonna do today.' Pierre would go out and party and get home super late and I'd call him, wake him up, and say, 'I don't care what you did last night, get down here! We gotta finish this record!'"

The two wrote the record's final cut, "Untitled"—a poignant ballad featuring timbales and a sizeable string section—a day before the last mix date. "We only had two days left on the record," Comeau exclaims. "We didn't have music or lyrics for it, even as it was time to do the artwork. But it turned out to be my favorite song on the album."

Comeau and Bouvier also wrote "One" near the end of the process. ("You gotta call one of your songs 'One,' Comeau figures. "Metallica did it, so we thought we might as well be cocky jackasses too.") After initially taking a crack at that tune, the group didn't quite dig it. So they rewrote it with an intriguing dancehall rhythm inspired by Sean Paul. "Most bands in our genre never touch something like that," Comeau says proudly. The song's title, incidentally, isn't the only thing Simple Plan has in common with the metal titans: Both have now worked with a rock-solid producer. Let's find out how the sessions gelled.

Story by Jeff Perlah • Photos by Paul La Raia

MD: Many Bob Rock productions feature immense drumming. What was it like being produced by him?

Chuck: When you're around this legend who produced Metallica's "Black Album" (*Metallica*), Mötley Crüe, Aerosmith, and Bon Jovi, it's like, "Alright, I'm gonna listen to him." Bob is a genius at recording drums. When we first met him, we explained what we wanted: The Black Album, but with our songs. The Black Album has this really clean yet intense and powerful sound. On our first album, the drums sounded great, but they weren't huge and didn't sound like we sounded live. On *Still Not Getting Any...* we wanted the drums to sound bigger and more open.

A lot of bands go for that really compressed sound, and that's cool, but we didn't want that on the new album. Bob had so many mic's on the kit, with five different placements for the kick. He built a tent with blankets and boxes around the bass drum to isolate it. I like the bass drum to have a lot of punch and attack, but also bottom. That's why I used a Remo kick pad and switched around the bass drum beater to the plastic side instead of the felt.

MD: Anything you'd like to reveal about the way your drums were tracked?

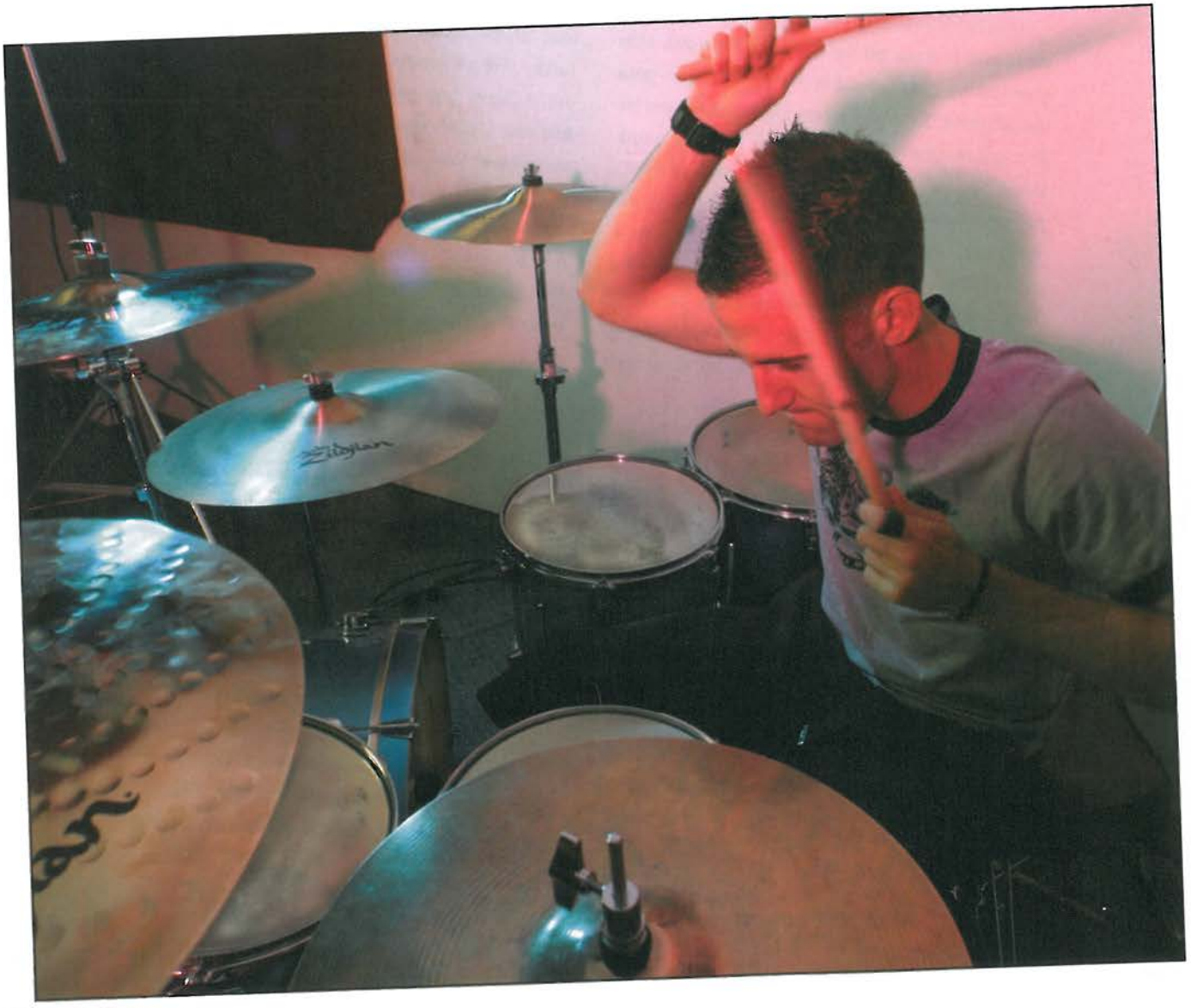
Chuck: I would do a bunch of takes and feel good about them, and then Bob would sometimes go, "Alright, are you ready to start tracking for real now?" It makes you feel like you have to do it twenty times better. What he ends up doing is making you play for a long time because early on, when you're not tired and feeling great, a drummer can tend to rush the click and be ahead. So he'll push you until you're super tired and then get the take because that's when you're more laid back and actually too tired to be ahead.

MD: How would you compare the making of *Still Not Getting Any...* with the crafting of your first album?

Chuck: We definitely wanted to make the new album, as the cliché goes, more mature than *No Pads, No Helmets...Just Balls*. This time around, Pierre and I wrote all the songs together in Vancouver, and we laid down demos with a program called Reason. As for the drums, we experimented with different ideas, breaking the groove down to a half-time feel, going into a military-style rhythm, and programming rolls, like in the song "Perfect World." We tried all sorts of things for the demos.

At first I was kind of opposed to that way of doing it—programming our ideas—but then we got into it and realized, Wow, doing it this way really allows you to focus on the song and make it great. So when we eventually got into the studio in Montreal, I used all our demos as a road map for what I played on the drums.

We wanted eleven songs that fit together,



but which were also different from one another. We felt it was important to not have a uniform kind of beat to the album. "Welcome To My Life" has a weird kind of shuffle with a little bounciness to it. "Shut Up" is super high-energy and in your face. "Thank You" is also really fast—a real punker. "One," as I said, has that dancehall feel. "Jump" has a powerful 311 kind of vibe, but not with 311-style reggae. "Everytime" recalls Ryan Adams. "Me Against The World" is the heaviest song we've ever written. We made it so big, especially from a drum standpoint.

MD: There were reports that Rancid's Tim Armstrong and The Black Eyed Peas would guest on the new album. What happened?

Chuck: It was a project that was up in the air but in the end didn't work out. We respect all those guys so much. And it would have been amazing. But with time constraints, we couldn't do it. It was like, Let's just finish the record!

Tim's been a really good friend of ours; we toured with Rancid on the Warped Tour and he was awesome. As for The Black Eyed Peas, we love hip-hop. I personally really like it a lot. You can't really pick that up when you hear us play, you can't really feel the hip-hop influence. But it's definitely there and we love that music, especially in terms of drums and beats. Those artists are pushing the envelope and really defining a lot of things. Even though it's not always real drummers playing, it's still rhythm and it's still interesting.

MD: What drummers have influenced and inspired you?

Chuck: We grew up loving punk rock from California—bands like Lagwagon, Pennywise, Bad Religion, and Face To Face, bands who have cool arrangements with odd stops and starts. Growing up listening to drummers like Tony Palermo from Ten Foot Pole and Jordan Burns from Strung Out made me aware of dynamic arrangements and that it's not enough to do a typical build-up to a chorus. Every transition should do something a little special, both with the drums and with the whole band rhythmically.

Josh Freese throws it down, too. More than anything else, that's what I try to do live. I really go out there and just give it everything I've got, one hundred percent. But at the same time, I think a great drummer knows when to do something dynamic and when to just shut up, lay back, and do his duty.

SIMPLE DRUMS

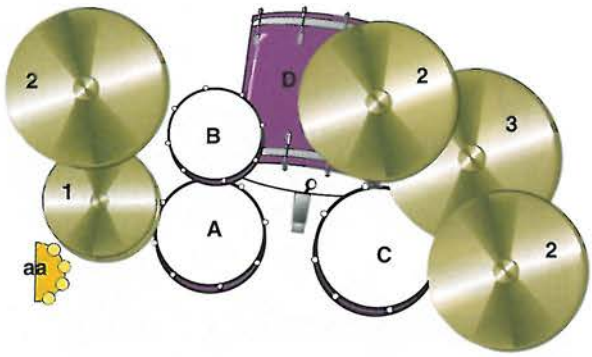
Drums: Drum Workshop in black and red sparkle finish
- **A.** $6^1/_2$x14 wood snare drum
- **B.** 9x12 tom
- **C.** 16x16 floor tom
- **D.** 18x22 bass drum

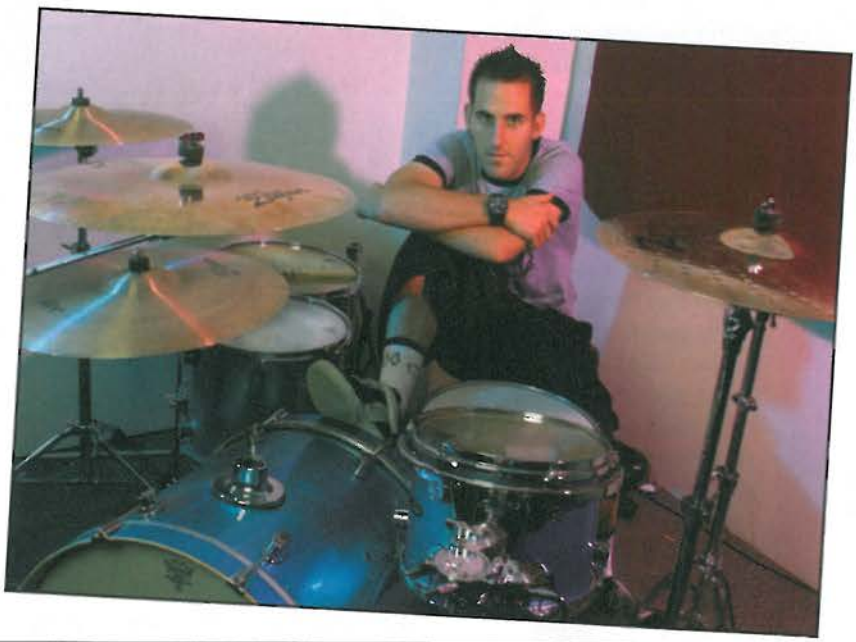
Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 14" New Beat hi-hats
2. 19" Z Custom medium crash
3. 21" A Sweet ride

Percussion: Latin Percussion
aa. tambourine

Hardware: DW 9000 series, including a single kick pedal (tight spring tension)
Heads: Evans Power Center on snare batter, Hazy 300 Resonant on snare-side, clear G2s on tops of toms with clear G1s on bottoms, EQ4 on bass drum batter with EQ3 Resonant on front.

Sticks: Pro-Mark Natural 5B (maple with wood tip)
Microphones: Sennheiser E901, E902, E904, 604, 908, and KM184 models





MD: Early on, the band—when it was known as Reset—toured with Ten Foot Pole.

Chuck: We were all about sixteen. Tony Palermo really took me under his wing. I really didn't know anything about being a working drummer. It was mostly about watching him operate, but he was also just a really good drummer. It opened up a whole new possibility for playing faster and doing cool parts. He was also pacing his energy very well.

More recently, I've learned that if you're gonna play for an hour and a half, you have to pace yourself and remember that you have, say, twelve more songs to play. It's not just about the first few songs. You have to figure out a way to make every song sound good. I used to give everything I had on the first three and then I was tired the rest of the gig. I've learned to play in a more economical way.

MD: Apparently you're not the only member of Simple Plan that plays drums.

Chuck: Pierre and David Desrosiers, our bassist, play drums as well, and they're really good. What's cool is that when we write together, we really have that synergy con-

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cerning drum arrangements. Instead of having one idea, we have three.

MD: So you must get feedback about your drumming from the other members.

Chuck: Oh, yeah. Basically there's no boundaries between us. So with the drums, it's not really me, it's the band, even though the way I play is the way I play. David actually came up with many amazing drum parts for the new record.

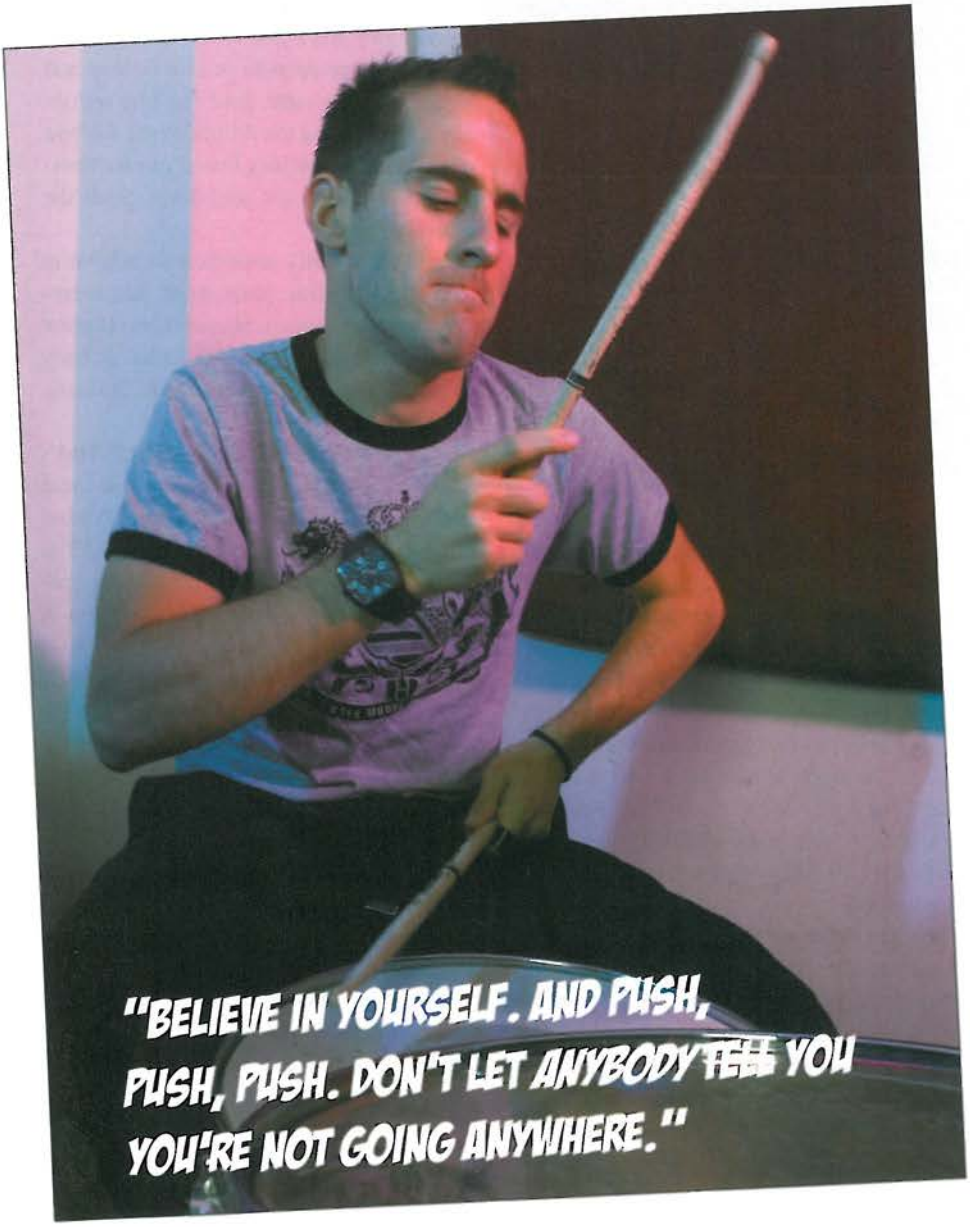
The whole approach with the band is about getting it right. Some guys could be territorial about their parts, but I think it's all about making the songs the best they can be. And that way of thinking also came into play while Bob Rock produced the album.

In "Everytime," there's this bridge, and initially it was a military-like thing with the snare, and Bob thought, "That's cool, but we did that on 'Perfect World.' How about doing a big tom thing instead." So now we have a part on "Everytime" that's so big and awesome, somewhat like Metallica. Bob is all about finding what's right. And if what you have is right, he's not going to change it. His approach is, "If there's a problem, I'm going to step in; if not, I'm not going to make changes just because I'm Bob Rock."

MD: Let's hear about your gear.

Chuck: I play a really basic Drum Workshop setup: snare, bass drum, and two toms. I use a single bass drum pedal, a DW 9000. As for cymbals, I use three crashes, one ride, and a hi-hat, all from Zildjian. I definitely ride on my crashes a lot, like Dave Grohl. But it's all about contrast; having a soft part and then opening it up with a big crash part, for instance.

I also position my drums in a unique way.. When I started playing, I used two bass



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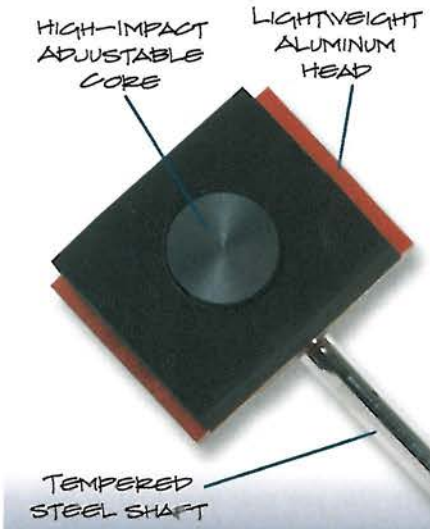

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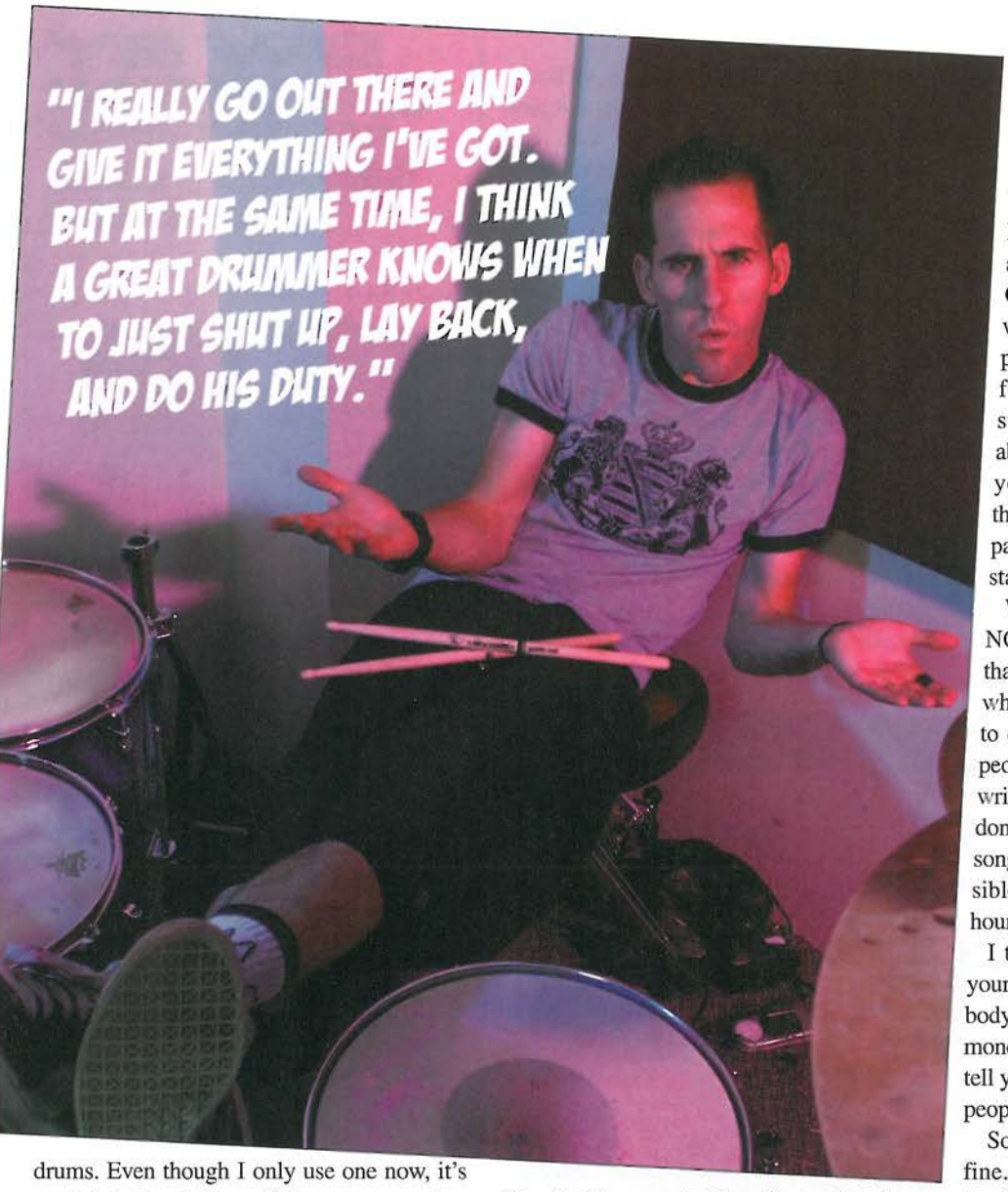

drums. Even though I only use one now, it's angled to the right as if there was another bass drum to my left. This setup helps me to reach everything easily. I also prefer to play rimshots on the snare. Every backbeat I play is a rimshot, just for the power and the sound.

MD: How do you position your seat?

Chuck: I raised it recently so I could position the floor tom flat. The cymbals are higher now too. I'm still trying to figure things out. In the studio, the kit is a lot more spread out lately, but I think I'm going to do that live, too. The drums used to be set up closer, but I would hit my hands and bleed all the time. Granted, the drums are harder to reach when the kit is more spread out, but you don't end up bleeding or dropping your sticks.

MD: Did you ever have to deal with an injury that hindered your drumming?

Chuck: The worst thing for me has been blisters. During our last tour, it got to the point where the blisters split open and were bleeding every night. It was really difficult. I even had to start wearing gloves for a while. It got to the point where I couldn't even open doors; my hands were bleeding everywhere. Now I'm back to no gloves and it feels really good. The problem was that I used to have a really tight grip on the sticks. Now I'm loosening up the grip and it's helping a lot.

MD: Do you do anything to stay in shape for drumming?

Chuck: I warm up extensively by stretching for forty-five minutes every day while on tour. I kind of go into my "zone," where I think about the show and the songs and forget about everything else. I used to take four sticks in each hand, like a baseball player does with bats, and practice the songs with them. I don't work out with weights—we don't have time! We were on tour for about three years straight before making this record. It's been nonstop, boom-boom-boom. I love this lifestyle.

MD: What advice would you give to aspiring drummers?

Chuck: To me, it's all about what you want to do. If you want to be a session player, the guy who plays drums for different acts, you have to learn lots of styles. But for me, a band player, it's about finding people you really like, who you're friends with, and playing with them. Find a style of music you're really passionate about, that you really love, and start a band.

When I discovered punk bands like NOFX, Bad Religion, and Face To Face, that's when it all sort of made sense. That's when it was like, "Okay, this is what I want to do." But don't just cover or copy other people—come up with your own way and write your own stuff. And don't be selfish; don't be all about the drums. Write the best songs you can and play live as much as possible. Rehearse a lot, and don't count the hours.

I think it's really important to believe in yourself. And push, push, push. Tell everybody about your band. Harass them. Borrow money if you have to. And don't let *anybody* tell you you're not going anywhere. So many people told us that.

Some people say, "You guys suck!" That's fine. That's what music is about. A great band is one who people love or hate. A band in the middle that no one cares about? You won't go anywhere. People love to be passionate about you, whether they love you or hate you.

MD: So what's with the name Simple Plan?

Chuck: When the band was starting out, we had this simple plan to write songs, make friends, tour the world, and do our own thing. We had this simple plan to just go out and do it. And we stuck to that plan. Obviously it's not that simple, and it's hard to make it in the music business. But if you combine hard work, perseverance, and talent, things are gonna happen. We're not the best musicians in the world, and I'm definitely not the best drummer in the world—I'm comfortable saying that—but I think a band can go past such challenges and still have a great career.

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MODERN DRUMMER, EVANS, PRO-MARK, MEINL, & TAMA PRESENT

THE SILVER SILK SET GIVEAWAY

To help Jason Bittner and Shadows Fall celebrate their great new release, *The War Within*, some of the companies whose gear Jason plays and Modern Drummer magazine have joined in to give one very lucky winner a pile of great gear…cymbals from Meinl, sticks and accessories from Pro-Mark, heads from Evans, all accompanying a complete Tama Starclassic set finished in vintage Silver Silk. So why not join in the celebration? Read the rules, send in an entry and it could all be yours!

Evans

- Evans clear G2 and G1s: 10",12",14",16"
- 22" Bass Drum and EQ3 Batter & Resonant heads
- 14" Snare - Power Center Reverse Dot and Hazy 300 heads

Meinl

- (1) Soundcaster 14" Powerful Hi-hats
- (1) Soundcaster 20" Powerful Ride
- (1) Soundcaster 18" Powerful Crash
- (1) Soundcaster 16" Powerful Crash
- (1) Soundcaster 18" China
- (1) Meinl 22" Cymbal Bag

Pro-Mark

- 12-pairs of Pro-Mark drumsticks (winner's choice of models), a Pro-Mark drumstick bag, a Pro-Mark cymbal bag, and a Pro-Mark hat and t-shirt.

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Starclassic Maple EFX Drums in Silver Silk Finish

- (1) 18 x 22" Bass
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- (1) 16 x 16" Floor Tom

- (1) Power Metal 5 1/2 x14" Brass Snare Drum

- (2) HTC77W Tom/Cymbal Combination Stand
- (1) HH905 Hi-Hat Stand
- (1) HS700W Snare Stand
- (1) HC72W Straight Cymbal Stand
- (1) HC73BW Boom Cymbal Stand
- (1) HP900P Iron Cobra Bass Pedal

Hear drummer Jason Bittner on the new Shadows Fall release, *The War Within*, in stores now.

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MEINL

TAMA

Contest prize drum set is different (more components) than drum set shown.

Contest Details:
1. Send a 3.5" x 5.5" or 4" x 6" postcard with your name, address, telephone number, and email address to: MD/Tama/Meinl Contest, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. 2. Enter as often as you wish, but each entry must be mailed separately. 3. ODDS OF WINNING DEPEND ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ENTRIES RECEIVED. 4. CONTEST BEGINS 1/1/05 AND ENDS 3/31/05. POSTCARDS MUST BE POSTMARKED BY 3/31/05 AND RECEIVED BY 4/5/05. 5. Prize Drawing: Prize winner will be selected by random drawing on or about April 11, 2005. Prize winner will be notified by phone or email on or about April 13, 2005. 6. Employees and their immediate families of Modern Drummer Publications, Inc., Hoshino (USA) Inc., Meinl U.S.A. Inc., J. D'Addario, Pro-Mark, and their affiliates are ineligible. 7. Sponsor is not responsible for lost, misdirected, and/or delayed entries. 8. Open to residents of the US and Canada, 18 years of age or older, void in PR, Quebec, Canada, and where prohibited by law. 9. Prize. One (1) winner will win: From Hoshino (USA), Inc: one (1) Tama drum kit consisting of one (1) SCB2218HSSK bass drum, one (1) SCT1008HSSK rack tom, one (1) SCT1208HSSK rack tom, one (1) SCF1414HSSK floor tom, one (1) SCF1616HTSSK floor tom, one (1) PBS255 snare drum, two (2) HTC77W combination stands, one (1) HH905 hi-hat stand, one (1) HS78DW snare stand, one (1) HC72W straight cymbal stand, one (1) HC73BW boom cymbal stand, one (1) HP900P bass drum pedal. Approximate retail value: $5269.99. From J. D'Addario: Evans heads: toms: Clear G2 and G1; one (1) 10", one (1) 12", one (1) 14", one (1) 16"; bass drum: one (1) 22" EQ3 batter, one (1) 22" Resonant; snare: one (1) 14" Power Center Reverse Dot, one (1) 14" Hazy 300. Approximate retail value: $371.50. From Meinl: Soundcaster Powerful cymbals: one (1) pair 14" hi-hats, one (1) 20" ride, one (1) 18" crash, one (1) 16" crash; one (1) Soundcaster 18" China; one (1) 22" cymbal bag. Approximate retail value: $1,814.00. From Pro-Mark: Twelve (12) pairs of sticks (winner's choice of models), one (1) drum stick bag, one (1) cymbal bag, one (1) hat, one (1) t-shirt. Approximate retail value: $400.00.10. Approximate retail value of all prizes: $7855.49. 11. Sponsored by Modern Drummer Publications, Inc., 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, (973) 239-4140. 12. This game subject to the complete Official Rules. For a copy of the complete Official Rules or winner listing, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Modern Drummer Publications/Tama/Meinl/Pro-Mark/D'Addario Official Rules/Winners List, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009.

DARKCRASH

Tim McGraw's BILLY "Thunder" MASON

Play Like You Were Dying

Billy Mason is an anomaly in the Nashville music scene. He's been the drummer with Tim McGraw for the past twelve years and has seen the singer rise from an up & coming country act to a chart-topping superstar. As with most notable Nashville-based musicians, the majority of Tim McGraw's records have been cut by the A-list studio drummers who churn out the majority of songs on country radio's playlists. But in recent years, McGraw has broken with Nashville tradition and recorded not one, but *two* multi-platinum albums using his own band. Billy Mason couldn't be happier.

Unlike the rock world, the country recording industry seems dedicated to keeping a solid line between studio and road musicians. It's fine for a studio drummer to take off for a few months and play a tour with a headlining artist, but it's virtually unheard of for a touring musician to play on an album.

Throughout Billy Mason's tenure with the band, McGraw has always said, "One day, you'll get to play on the record." This has been one of the motivating factors that has kept Billy going, and probably accounts for the relatively stable lineup of McGraw's band. But until an artist gains enough power to make certain demands on his own behalf, he's at the mercy of his label when it comes to recording. The trend is to hire a producer who has a ton of hit records to his credit, then allow him to record the album as he sees fit. If that means that the only person on the record who actually tours is the singer, then so be it. The rest of the band simply learns the songs from the record.

The downside to this approach is that you get a group of very talented musicians essentially doing what every Top-40 cover band in the country does: copy the record as closely as possible. Granted, at this level of the game, the equipment is better and there are engineers who have the ability to match the live sound to the recorded sound with a high degree of accuracy. But it does seem like a tremendous waste of talent.

Finally, about three years ago, the unthinkable happened. After ten years of popping gold and platinum albums out like clockwork with a studio band, McGraw asked if he could use his touring band to record the next album. The record company told him to go ahead and try, thinking they would probably wind up having to do it over with studio musicians—but the joke was on them.

After selling well over half a million units in the first week alone, *Tim McGraw And The Dancehall Doctors* (named for McGraw's road band) went on to sell over three million records and added three more number-1 singles to the singer's growing catalog of hits. The numbers exceeded those of every previous McGraw release; the album even inspired a book, *This Is Ours*, which documented the recording sessions and the story of how The Dancehall Doctors recorded it.

Story by John Aldridge • Photos by Rick Malkin

The overall success of that album prompted McGraw to repeat the process for his latest album, this time apparently with even greater success. *Live Like You Were Dying* sold over 600,000 copies in its first week of release, and since last August has easily passed the two-million mark.

Having interviewed Billy for his last *MD* article back in 1998, I was curious to see what impact being on the records had made on his playing and overall view of his role as a drummer. I had the opportunity to visit with Billy when Tim McGraw played in Oklahoma City last month, and I was surprised to hear about some of the changes that had come about since we last spoke.

MD: So what's the biggest change in your gig since our last visit?

Billy: Playing on the records is the biggest thing. It's tough to be on the road this long, but I wouldn't have had the chance to play on these albums if I hadn't stuck it out. It would have sucked if I'd quit the band, then gone into Wal-Mart and seen Tim's CDs on the rack with the rest of the band playing on them.

MD: Had you recorded demos for Tim before?

Billy: I never recorded anything with him. We were always told that one day we'd get to play on the records, but you know how that goes. In Nashville, the studio musicians do the majority of the recording. I think a lot of the artists would like to record with their bands, but the producers call the shots. Because they've recorded multiple platinum albums, there's a certain amount of security that comes with hiring a well-known producer. Tim always wanted us to play on his records and he finally reached a point in his career when he could exercise a little more control over the recording process.

MD: What is the biggest difference between playing with Tim live and playing with him in the studio?

Billy: Pressure. I was told when we did the first album that if I wasn't able to cut it, the A-team studio drummer was on hold. Lonnie Wilson, who is a great studio drummer in Nashville, had cut all of Tim's previous albums, so they knew that if I couldn't pull it off, he could. But after playing Tim's music for twelve years, I was able to come up with what they wanted to hear.

Byron Gallimore was the producer, and he has a reputation for recording with the drums out front in the mix. I did have to change a couple of the drum fills on the first album because they were too busy. I've always been a straight-ahead drummer, and my fills are pretty simple. But Byron pointed out that the simpler the fill is, the more powerful it will be and the more he could pump it up in the mix. Since Tim's records have always had really up-front drums, I couldn't be too busy or it would muddy it up.

MD: How would you describe your playing?

Billy: I play from my heart. I don't think like, "Let's put a 16th-note fill in here, and an 8th-note triplet there." I play what the music makes me feel like playing. Emotional songs bring out the strongest parts. Big, powerful, simple fills just feel so good when they hit the mark.

MD: What do you think prepared you the most for what you're doing now with Tim?

Billy: I've always played with a variety of bands, from '50s/'60s rock, to Elvis impersonators, to funk and disco bands. Having that experience to draw from has prepared me to play the wide range of styles that Tim covers. I can't stress too much how important it is to listen to everything and try to learn to play in any style that you hear.

I had a friend come to town a few years ago, and I got him an audition with a legendary country star. Everything was going well, until the bandleader asked him to play a train beat. He'd never heard one and just couldn't pull it off. That's an example of a simple thing that he could have learned if he'd been a little more open to other styles of music.

MD: What did you do specifically to prepare for the first record?

Billy: I was pretty confident about being able to play what would fit the music, but I wasn't that comfortable with the studio. I called Lonnie Wilson and asked him if I could follow him around for a day or so to try to see how he approached it.

MD: That must have been pretty interesting.

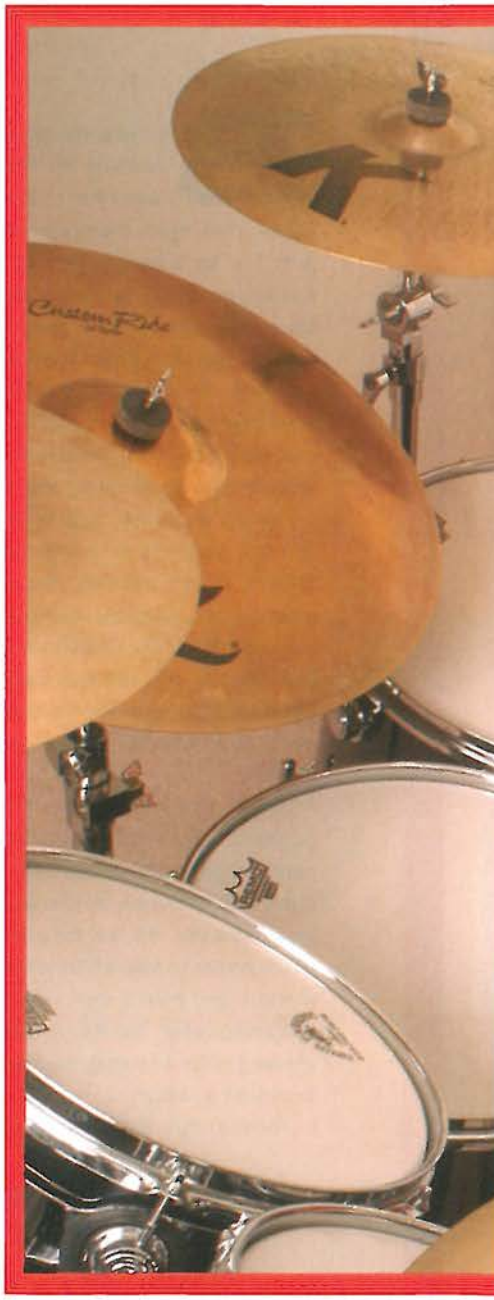
Billy: Following Lonnie was pretty scary. I went with him to see a typical day in the studio when he was recording an album with John Michael Montgomery. He helped me to see what he was doing, but more importantly, he showed me a lot about what *not* to do and play.

MD: Was that awkward in any way? I mean, you were taking a job away from him that he'd had for several years. How did he react to that?

Billy: Well, I asked Lonnie if he was mad about me playing on the album, but he said he wasn't. I think he could relate to the fact that I really had put in my time with Tim and maybe deserved a shot at recording, so he was okay with it.

MD: What did you take away from watching Lonnie work?

Billy: One of the most helpful things was seeing his attitude when he played. He leads the session with all the confidence in the world. He sets the mood for a song



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Heads: Remo coated Emperor on snare batter, smooth white Emperor on toms, PowerStroke 3 on kick
Sticks: Pro-Mark Marco Minnemann model (hickory with wood tip)
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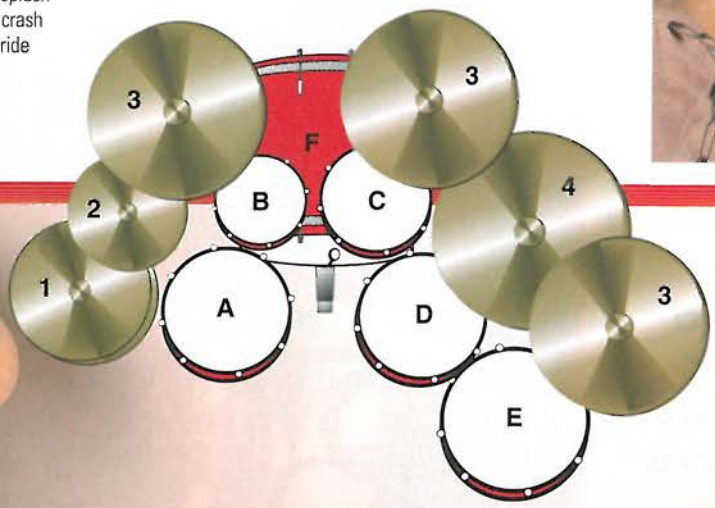


with his playing. It showed me that I needed to be strong in doing my part and counting off songs and setting the tempo.

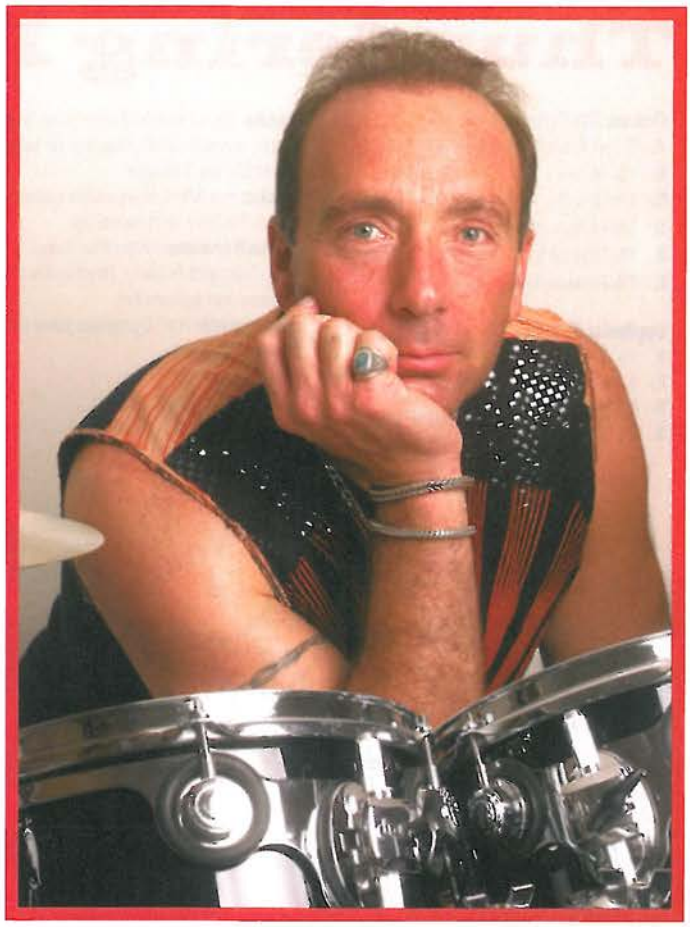
Another thing that I liked about Lonnie was that he told me to just play and not to worry about the click. Since Tim's live show is played to a click and my previous gig with Paulette Carlson was also played with a click, I'm very comfortable with that. In fact, it would almost be more difficult for me to play without a click nowadays, or at least really different.

Having a click track takes the burden of the tempo off your shoulders, and it really lets you think about your fills. The simpler the fill, the more space there is, and there's a tendency to rush. I've spent a lot of time practicing fills so that they don't rush. When I don't play with a click, I still hear it in my head because it's so much a part of what I've done for the last twelve years.

MD: How did being on the record change things on the tour?

Billy: It made the tour a lot more fun for all of us, because we were playing parts that *we* came up with instead of having to copy somebody else's licks. When we play "Live Like You Were Dying," there are people out there in the audience crying and

"After the last song was recorded, I was so relieved that I turned around and cried for joy. I was just happy to have been able to do it."



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singing along. It's a song that touches a lot of people, and it makes me very happy to have had the opportunity to play on it.

MD: How did the recording of the second album compare to the first?

Billy: With the first album, they had me in a separate building, and my only access to the band and the booth was through a video screen. That was *weird*. The building I was in was supposed to have been haunted and I was pretty much the only guy in there. I'd cut the track and then I wouldn't hear anything for what seemed like forever, but I could still see them talking on the screen. There were several times when Byron and Tim would be shaking their heads and I was thinking that I'd really blown it and that it sucked. Then they'd push the talk back button and say, "Great job!"

After the last song was recorded, I was so relieved that I turned around to the picture window, looked out at the mountains, and cried for joy. I was just happy to have been able to do it and not get replaced. The pressure was enormous. For the second album we went back to the same studio, but the band was all in the same building, and most of us were in the same room. I really felt more a part of the process because I could see and hear everything and everyone immediately. It took a lot of the suspense out of it and made it much more enjoyable.

MD: It sounds like the pressure was not as high on the second album.

Billy: The first album has sold over three million copies so far, and it spawned three number-1 hits, so I figured we didn't do too badly. The second time was more like playing live. I had a lot more confidence the second time around, and I didn't worry so much during the process. I figured I could just play, and if they didn't like something I did, I could change it without getting stressed over it. I wasn't that worried about choking, though there was still a lot of pressure to get it right.

MD: Did you have to go back and fix many things after they were recorded?

Billy: We didn't overdub any drums on either album. Other than changing a few fills on the second album after we got back to Nashville, all of my tracks were finished when we left New York. We had to cut three more tracks after we got back to Nashville, and when we were in the studio Byron asked me to play a different kind of fill with a little more space in it. Of course the Pro Tools guys went nuts with it, making everything perfect. But when I asked if they had to do a lot to make my parts work out, they told me that my stuff didn't require a lot of tweaking.

MD: Has anything funny happened as a result of being a part of the recording process?

Billy: We've had some pretty cool things happen. When we were touring before we went in to record the first album, Tim told us that if it sold more than half a million copies during its first week of release—which we thought was pretty near impossible—he would buy us each a Harley. When the album came out and sold over 600,000 copies the first week, Tim made good on his word. I sure like my new Harley. Thanks, Tim!

MD: What do you think has propelled the sales of these two albums beyond Tim's previous releases?

Billy: I think the book, *This Is Ours,* had a lot to do with it. Fans just assume that the band they come to see is the band

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they've heard on the records, and the music industry doesn't do anything to let them know any differently. I think that when the book came out and they read the story of how we got to be on the first album, it really made them sit up and take notice of the newer stuff and compare it to the previous albums. Just the buzz of the book and the fact that the fans had something new to read about Tim and his interaction with the band probably had a lot to do with it.

MD: Has playing on Tim's album led to any other studio work?

Billy: A little bit. I played on a couple of Christian albums right after the first Tim album, one for Gary Slayton called *Heaven* and one for Lawrence Bishop titled *Prayer Of A Badman*. But we tour so much that there's not really a lot of extra time for outside projects. I'm looking forward to doing more of that, though—if Tim ever slows down long enough for us to take a breath.

MD: How much touring do you do?

Billy: We did the record last January, and they worked on it through April. Then we rehearsed the entire month of May. We've been on tour ever since then. On the days off where we'd normally be resting, we've been flying back and forth on Tim's Lear jet to New York and LA to do all the talk shows. So far, we've been on *The Today Show*, *The View*, *Ellen*, *Good Morning America*, Jimmy Kimmel, and Jay Leno twice.

We did a live concert TV special in Green Bay called *Tim McGraw: Here And Now* that aired the night before Thanksgiving, and we also filmed a Bud Light commercial in LA, which I got to act in!

MD: Switching gears, I noticed that your cymbals are all lower and your throne is higher since the last time I saw you. Why the changes?

Billy: It was more of a comfort decision than anything. I'm always looking for ways to better myself or my playing, so I change things up when they don't feel right. I can still rock 'n' roll with the cymbals a little lower. Also, on the first album I used all Zildjian Z cymbals, and I was using Pro-Mark's Liberty DeVitto model sticks, which are *huge*. The Zs sounded great, but they're really thick and heavy, and my wrists actually started hurting during the last tour. Once I changed to the lighter K series in the same sizes, I also changed my sticks to the smaller Marco Minnemann model, and my wrist problems disappeared. I use Pro-Mark stick wrap, so I was able to adjust the grip size and still reduce the stick weight.

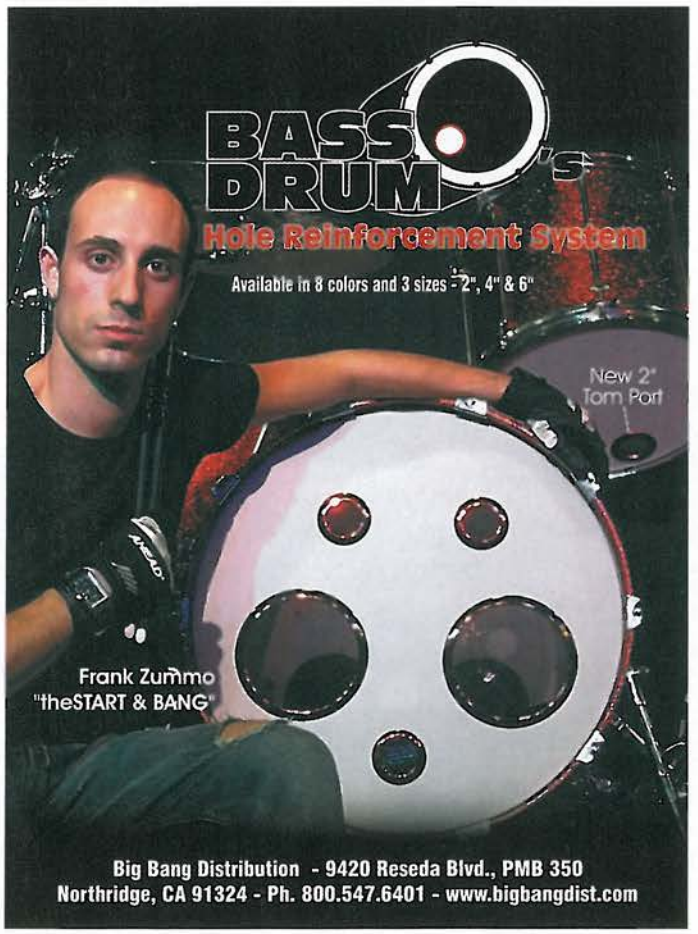
MD: So was it a physical decision to switch from Zs to Ks, or a sonic issue?

Billy: I went from Zs to Ks to get a little different sound in the studio. The Ks were a little warmer sounding. I liked the way that they sounded and felt under my sticks so much that I decided to switch to K crashes on my touring setup as well.

MD: What kind of drums did you use in the studio?

Billy: On the first album I used a black lacquer DW kit that I had been touring with for the previous three years. I really liked the sound of those drums and wanted to have them on the album. [Drum tech] Harry McCarthy also brought in a DW Tobacco Sunburst kit, which I used on some of the songs. Harry's a tuning *monster*, and both kits sounded great.

On the second album, I used my own



DW kit and a couple of other DW kits that Harry brought in. We tried out a ton of different snare drums. For the second album, we must have had about forty snare drums at the studio to choose from. Harry brought about thirty and I brought about ten, and Todd Trent at Ludwig sent out a couple of Black Beauties. We wound up using a couple of my favorite DWs and the two Black Beauties for most of it. My favorite was a DW Collectors Series maple snare, like the one that I use on tour, with die-cast hoops and forty-two-strand snares. But the ultimate choice of which snare was used for each song was up to the producer, with a lot of input from Harry.

Harry's experience with recording drums really contributed to the decisions on which drums fit which songs, and the producer really listened to his suggestions. Harry wrote on the drumheads which drums were used on which songs—and I kept all the heads!

MD: We've talked a lot about working in the studio, but how do you keep in shape on the road?

Billy: Part of my daily routine is to work out for an hour or so and to jog. Tim has a complete gymnasium in a truck that travels with us, so we all have access to it and I take advantage of it every day. We also play basketball every afternoon. By the time we get to the show, I'm pumped up and ready. I take a hot shower before the show, and then I warm up on a prac-

Harry McCarthy

McGraw Session Super Tech

Harry McCarthy, the drum tech for the sessions discussed in this article, has a client list that reads like a who's who of drumming royalty. During the past twenty-plus years, he's worked with Jeff Porcaro, Steve Gadd, Max Weinberg, Matt Chamberlain, Vinnie Colaiuta, Don Henley, and literally dozens of other world-class drummers both in the studio and on the road.

McCarthy (left) and Mason

MD: You've teched for everybody. How did you come to be on the Tim McGraw sessions?

Harry: I have a tremendous amount of respect for Billy Mason as a person and as a drummer. My job on the Tim McGraw sessions was to help Billy relax and think only about playing the drums. With me providing suggestions for drum choices and bringing in a large sampling of my collection of snare drums, sets, and cymbals, Billy didn't have to worry about that end of the session too much.

Tim and producer Byron Gallimore really were going for a certain vibe on each track. On both Tim McGraw records with The Dance Hall Doctors, we had the luxury of bringing in an arsenal of drum equipment. I was in the control room during tracking. We would discuss a certain sound that they were looking for, and I would pick a drum that I thought would work. We used a few different cymbals and some vintage drums in addition to Billy's DW drums, and we would set up different drumkits in bigger or smaller rooms to vary the sound. Engineer Julian King is one of the best when it comes to getting drum sounds, and he was very open to whatever Byron and I suggested in terms of drums and different locations.

The studio and its surroundings were a dream come true for any artist. Allaire Studios (www.allairestudios.com) is a world-class destination studio located in the mountains near Woodstock, New York. I felt very lucky to be a part of it.

For more on Harry, check out his Web site: www.drumparadise.com.

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tice pad to loosen up my hands. I don't drink anything but water and Gatorade during the show, and afterwards I pretty much take a shower and turn in. The key to staying fresh on the road is getting enough rest.

MD: Do you do much practicing to keep your chops up?

Billy: No. We just play every night! Tim's music requires a driving rhythm with a lot of power. Whether it was Lonnie Wilson or me on the records, the drum parts are always out front and powerful. By staying in good shape physically, I'm able to put the same energy into a live performance that I did in the studio. Since we play four to six two-and-a-half-hour shows a week, that keeps me in shape to the point where I don't need to practice much when we're on tour.

MD: What motivates you in the face of such a grueling schedule?

Billy: God is a major focus in my life. Listening to Christian music helps me to keep my focus, do my best, and work hard to be a good example. While I practice I listen to contemporary Christian music as a kind of metronome. But it also puts me in a positive frame of mind just before I go on stage. I feel that being a Christian in a secular band gives me the opportunity to set a good example for the people around me as well as the audience.

MD: How do you reach the audience beyond your playing?

Billy: While I'm playing, I always look out at the audience to see if I can connect with someone. If I see a person who looks like they might need a little extra something—a young kid, someone in a wheelchair, or a person who may not exactly fit in with the crowd—I'll try to make eye contact with that person and play to them. After the show, I make a point of speaking to them, offering an encouraging word and giving them a pair of sticks.

MD: What would you suggest for young drummers who are looking to improve their time?

Billy: Practice with a click or metronome. Our entire show, as well as the studio stuff, is done with a click track. Since the majority of touring bands and virtually *all* recordings are ruled by a click, I'd suggest practicing with one to develop a good sense of time.

MD: What about when you're home? Do you practice then?

Billy: When I'm home, I take drum lessons from [Yanni drummer] Charlie Adams. He's helped me work on my reading skills, which is one area where I'm not as good as I want to be. I also take piano lessons and enjoy playing a lot. My goal is to be able to read anything that's put in front of me and to be able to play the piano as well as the drums. I also think that the piano lessons make me more aware of what's going on in the songs. I strongly believe that any drummer would benefit from playing a melodic instrument.

MD: Do you have any bits of wisdom you'd like to share with drummers who read this and think it can never happen to them?

Billy: You've got to believe, and you shouldn't give up on your dreams. No matter how bad things get, if you hang in there, it will eventually happen for you. Your job is to hang in there and do the best you can every time. God will take care of the rest of it.

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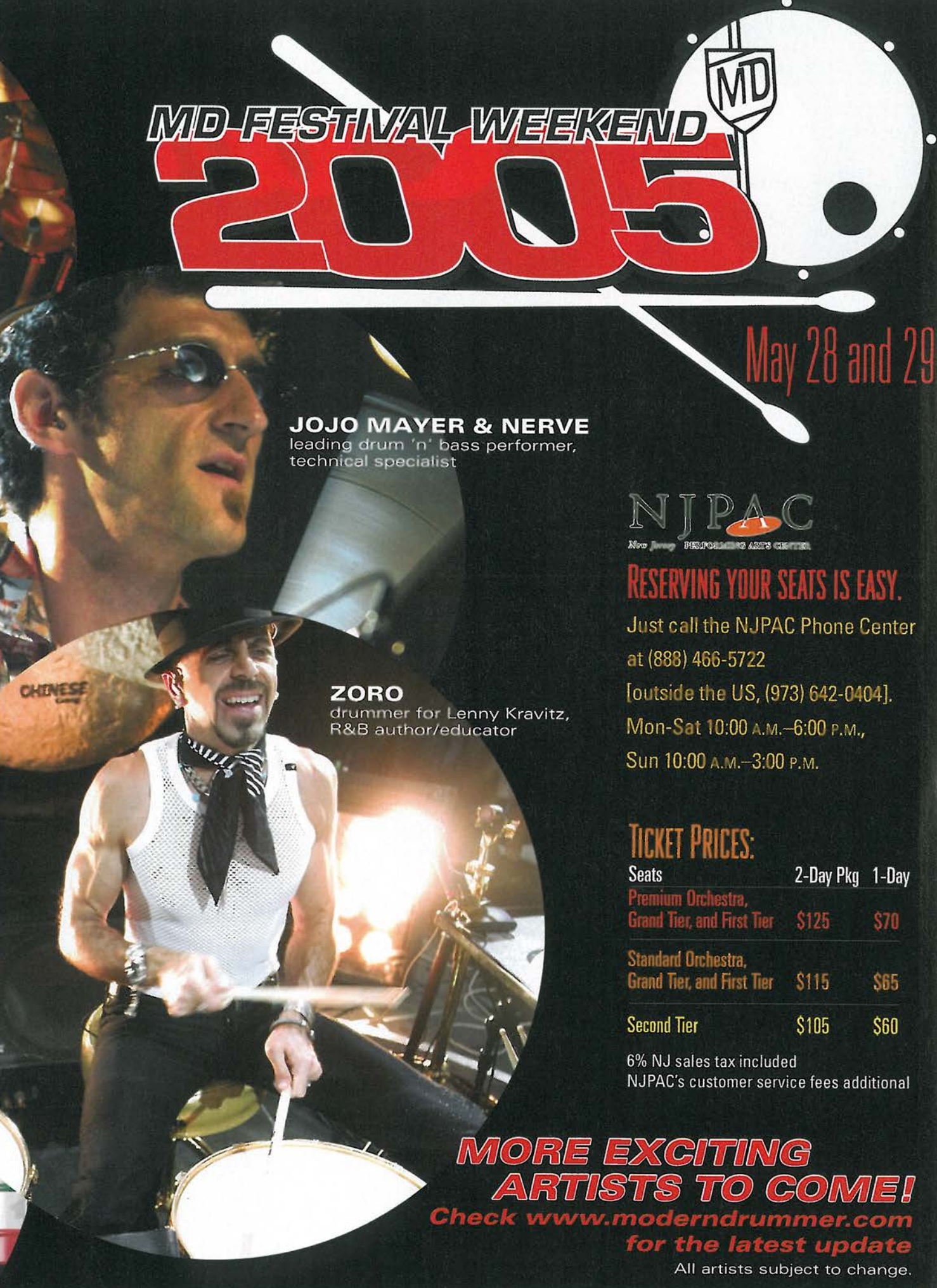

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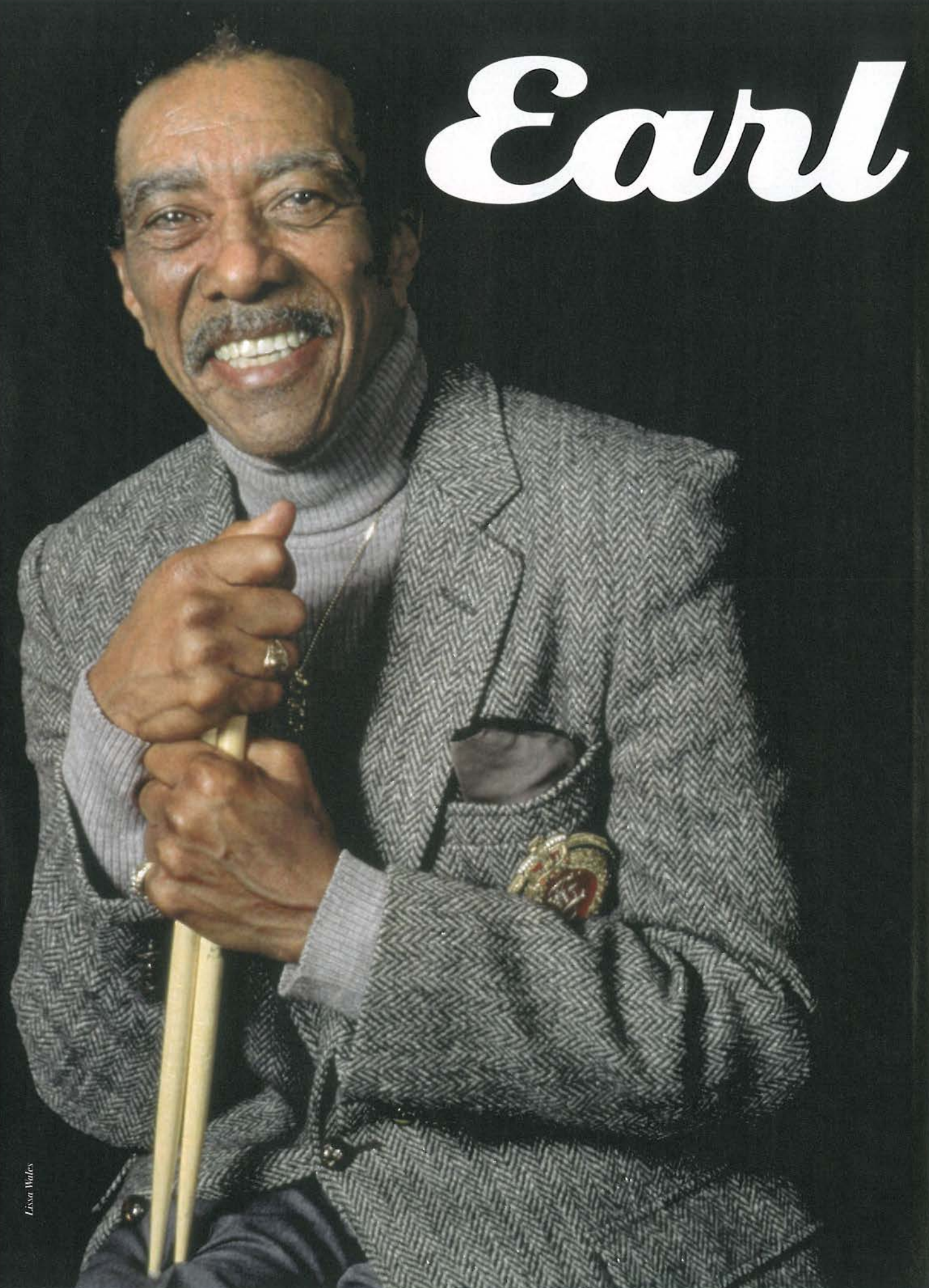

Lissa Wales

Palmer

Rock 'N' Roll Studio Legend

by Robyn Flans

Earl Palmer is musical history personified. Some eighty-year-olds can reminisce about how TV came into their lives, how computers infiltrated day-to-day life, how they watched a man land on the moon, and a whole myriad of inventions and changes. For music lovers, there are many who can recall the moment rock 'n' roll hit the airwaves. And then there's Earl Palmer, the drummer who can remember life before rock 'n' roll and how he was met with a music that demanded a new treatment. It was Palmer who had to think up how to rhythmically define this new music.

At eighty years old, Palmer has a lot to be proud of. He's the drummer on some of the earliest rock 'n' roll classics: "The Fat Man" by Fats Domino in 1949, Lloyd Price's 1952 hit "Lawdy Miss Clawdy," Smiley Lewis's "I Hear You Knocking" and Little Richard's "Kansas City" and "Tutti Fruitti" in 1955, Richard's "Long Tall Sally" and "Slippin' And Slidin'" the following year.

By 1957, some of the recordings Palmer was doing began to cross from the R&B charts into the pop world. That year he recorded Little Richard's "Lucille," and, oh, that amazing record by Sam Cooke, "You Send Me." The next year the drummer played on such hits as Eddie Cochran's "Summertime Blues," Fats Domino's "I Hear You Knocking," Little Richard's "Good Golly Miss Molly," and Ritchie Valens' "Donna" and "La Bamba," not to mention Sheb Wooley's notorious novelty song, "The Purple People Eater." Another goofy hit for Palmer was 1959's "Farmer John" by Don And Dewey. That year he also recorded Jan & Dean's "Baby Talk" and Connie Stevens' "Sixteen Reasons."

Palmer's streak of hit-making continued into the '60s, including Bobby Bare's "Book Of Love," as well as records by such artists as Paul Anka, Glen Campbell, Bobby Darin, Jackie DeShannon, The Lettermen, The Limeliters, Lou Rawls, Bobby Vee (the number-1 hit "Take Good Care Of My Baby"), followed by another number-1, Ray Charles' "I Can't Stop Lovin' You" (1962). That same year, "The Lonely Bull" introduced Herb Alpert And The Tijuana Brass, and Bobby Darin's "You're The Reason I'm Living" went to number-3, followed by Ketty Lester's "Love Letters." In 1963 Jan & Dean hit with "Drag City" and "Surf City," and Nino Tempo & April Stevens had a number-1 with "Deep Purple."

Palmer's contributions in the mid-'60s were just as staggering: Jan & Dean's "Dead Man's Curve" and "The Little Old Lady From Pasadena," as well as The Righteous Brothers' "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'" and "Unchained Melody." Earl also tracked Sonny & Cher's debut record, as well as Beach Boys and Supremes LPs. Shortly thereafter, in '66, Ike & Tina Turner hired him for "River Deep Mountain High." And as for TV work, Palmer can be heard on the original themes of *Batman*, *Mission Impossible*, *77 Sunset Strip*, and *Hawaiian Eye*, among many others. No question, his is one of the finest careers in drumming history.

Lissa Wales

Earl Palmer was born in New Orleans in 1924. He credits his initiation into the world of rhythm to his childhood as a tap dancer in Vaudeville. "Being in Vaudeville as a kid with my mother, I understood about listening to singers," he says. "Back then I was dancing and playing drums. And I developed an understanding for song form. I knew where the bridge was in a tune, and I would change the musical color in it. If you listen to a song, the bridge is different from the rest of the song. So being a drummer, you think, 'I should play a little differently—change a color, play a cymbal, use another sound.' It's about understanding the structure of the song."

After serving in the army, Palmer went to school on the GI bill and hooked up with New Orleans' Dave Bartholomew and his group, which became the Crescent City's first studio band. By 1957, Earl was anxious to move to Los Angeles, where he had also had some of his formative years of schooling. It wasn't long before Palmer was embraced by the Los Angeles studio community, as well as by the film composers there.

Beginning in the early '60s, Palmer did an abundance of film work, recording the soundtracks for such motion pictures as *Judgement At Nuremberg*, *Hud*, *It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, *Grand Prix*, *Barefoot In The Park*, *In Cold Blood*, *In The Heat Of The Night*, *Valley Of The Dolls*, *Bullitt*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Sterile Cuckoo*, *Sweet Charity*, *On A Clear Day You Can See Forever*, *Plaza Suite*, *Lady Sings The Blues*, *What's Up, Doc?*, *Cinderella Liberty*, *The Deep*, *Breaking Away*, *The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas*, *Gremlins*, and *The Money Pit*.

Simultaneously, as the turbulent '60s turned into the '70s, Palmer was hired by such artists as Frank Sinatra, The Byrds, Neil Young, James Brown, Barbra Streisand, Randy Newman, Bonnie Raitt, Tim Buckley, Maria Muldaur, Little Feat, Teena Marie, and Elvis Costello.

Rolling Stone's Robert Palmer summed Earl up thusly: "If any single musician can be credited with defining rock 'n' roll as a rhythmic idiom distinct from jump, R&B, and all else that preceded it, that musician is surely Earl Palmer."

Recently Palmer turned eighty, as good a reason as any for *MD* to grill him about his extensive musical history. Knowing full well that it would take a book to cover his career (Tony Scherman's *Backbeat: Earl Palmer's Story* does just that), we knew we were limited to hitting the highlights. Throughout, Palmer's recollections were sharp, candid, and illuminating.

Incredibly, the drummer announced, excitedly, that he's about to enter his fourth marriage, with a lovely woman named Jeline. This speaks volumes about a man who lives life to its fullest. "Behind every good man is a good woman," he laughs. "I've never been happier in my life. Marriage is wonderful. If you've got a wife and children you love, and who love you—and you make a decent living at what you enjoy doing—you've got heaven on earth."

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photo by Andrew Lepley

MD: Let's start by talking about your recording career. Is there a particular noteworthy session that comes to mind?

Earl: I'm particularly proud of the fact that I play all types of music, so I can't narrow it down to one. The first that comes to mind, though, is a rhythm & blues thing, Fats Domino's "I'm Walkin'," with Dave Bartholomew, who said, "Let's do something different from what we usually do, something we've never heard anybody do before." I looked at him like, "Who do you think I am, Einstein?"

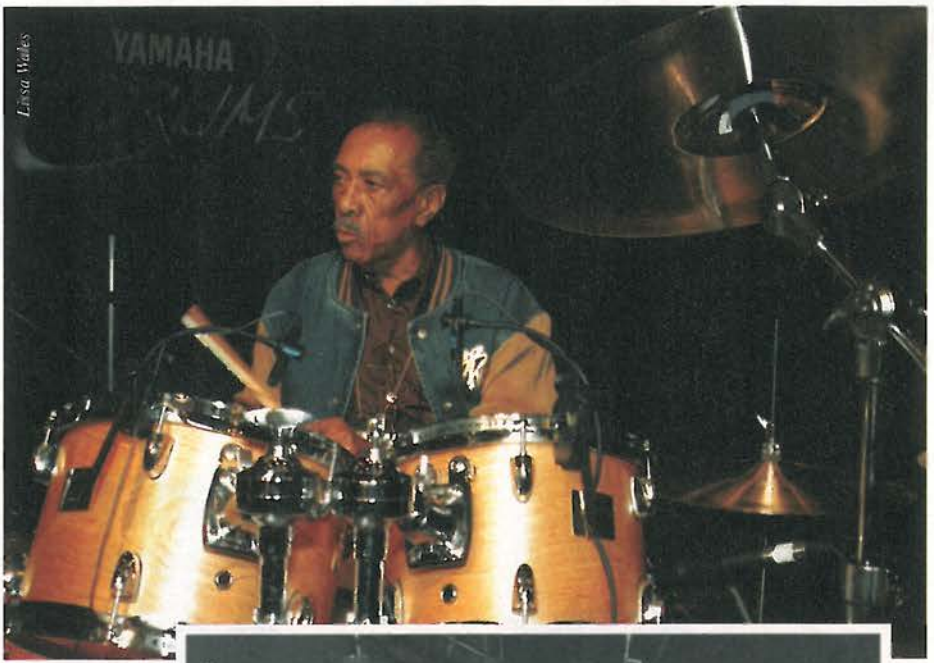
I tried a number of things on it, and the response was, "Not that, not that." I said, "What do you want me to do?" He said, "I don't know, you're the drummer." So I thought, "Alright, I'll fix it!" Dave liked the way I played cymbals, so I decided I would *not* play any cymbals at all. I just played the snare drum—a plain single-stroke roll with an accented backbeat on 2 and 4. I said, "How about that?" as a joke. He said, "That's the best thing I've heard you play in a long time." I was putting him on, but he loved it.

Playing that kind of stuff is really what got me into the Rock 'N' Roll Hall Of Fame, although coming from New Orleans, my forte has always been jazz. If anybody asked me what I was, I said I was a jazz drummer. When I learned to play, there was no rock 'n' roll.

MD: As a jazz drummer on the front lines, inventing drums for the birth of rock 'n' roll, how did you approach the instrument?

Earl: That was one of my favorite times in music—learning how to make the change from jazz to rock 'n' roll. I found that rock 'n' roll was about playing a solid backbeat. Today, you play it all the way through a piece. But there were times, like in the old big bands or even in Dixieland, where they weren't playing any backbeat. The only time you'd hear it was in an out-chorus. But I took that and played it all the way through a rock 'n' roll song.

Also back then, many drummers would use one cymbal to ride on throughout a song or behind different soloists. There was no change of color. I really tried to think about changing colors to suit different parts of a song, be it hi-hat, ride cymbal, or a different cymbal.



Lissa Wales

Rick Malkin

Earl at a recent clinic performance (top), in the studio in the early '80s (middle), and looking dapper in the '70s.

Rick Malkin

"When kids ask me what to do when they make a mistake, I tell them you just have to play the next piece as if it didn't happen. It's gone. It's over. Don't dwell on it."

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MD: But how did you figure out the beats for rock 'n' roll?

Earl: First, there was rhythm & blues, which came from simple songs and blues. You didn't want to get too fancy. Just get a good pocket going and hold it. Frankly, I think that's what the instrument is made for anyway. Soloing is fine, in the hands of a great drummer. But you don't find a lot of truly great soloists on the instrument.

MD: You have to be the foundation and the support.

Earl: Exactly. That's what other musicians care about. From putting that backbeat in rhythm & blues music, which became rock 'n' roll, we found out that what was needed was to make people want to dance.

Rhythm & blues music became rock 'n' roll because white parents didn't want their kids listening to it due to the suggestive lyrics. Then a deejay in Chicago, Alan Freed, said, "Let's call this something different. The parents won't know the difference. Let's call it rock 'n' roll."

MD: Other memorable sessions?

Earl: Sarah Vaughan was my favorite singer, and we were good buddies, too. There was an album called *The Explosive Side Of Sarah Vaughan*. All the tunes started like a ballad and then suddenly the tempo would double and then double again. It was like the music exploded. That was a favorite of mine. I always consider those kinds of things as involving a lot of musicianship and taste, where you knew where your instrument belonged in the music and you didn't overshoot it. You played within yourself. I enjoyed that.

A lot of the things I did with Lalo Schifrin were great, too, like the TV show *Mission Impossible*, which had lots of good parts. That was a gas. I did *77 Sunset Strip*, too. Quincy Jones' first show, *Ironside,* was a lot of fun, too.

MD: What was your worst session?

Earl: That's hard to say without mentioning names, because many times you can't really talk about a worst session unless you blame somebody. I can tell you some worst times where it was *my* fault. There was a job for producer Lew Wasserman at Universal—something like a birthday or benefit for Clint Eastwood—and it was with composer Lee Holdridge. I wasn't feeling good at all, I made a few mistakes, and I think I did one of the worst jobs in my life.

When kids ask me what to do when they make a mistake, I tell them you just have to realize when you've made one and play the next piece as if it didn't happen. It's gone. It's over. Don't dwell on it.

MD: It's good to know this kind of thing happens to everybody. You're human and not a machine. Did you ever do a record that you ended up hating when you heard it?

Earl: "In The Mood." I hated that song because I had to play it on a lot of gigs. But I did a rock 'n' roll arrangement of it for Ernie Field, which ended up being a hit. The royalties from that one paid for my house.

MD: Worst artist you ever worked for?

Earl: Elvis Costello. Actually, it wasn't that he was a bad artist to work for, but I remember the sessions being so uncomfortable. He was so aloof. Finally, on one of the breaks, I said, "What's the matter with this guy? He can't say hello or talk to people?" And T-Bone Burnett said, "He's just in awe of you guys."

MD: What about bad producers?

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"I've seen projects where they take two months to make an album, or they go away for vacation and come back and finish it. Back in the day, we had to make an album in three hours."

Earl: In the early days, there were far more bad producers than bad musicians, because it seemed as if anybody who got a job in the booth—engineer, assistant, whoever—the next thing you know, he's a producer.

MD: What about Phil Spector?

Earl: Phil and I got along great. I worked with him way back when he was in The Teddy Bears—"To Know Him Is To Love Him." We got along really great, but he could be strange. I thought a lot of that came from insecurity.

MD: Let's talk about some of the hardest sessions you had to do.

Earl: Recording music for cartoons was some of the hardest music I had to do, because it's very exacting and the arrangements are challenging. The music follows the action in the cartoon far more than in a movie. There's one common click track running through all of it, but the meter changes all over the piece. Plus the notes go by so fast. You need to have your reading chops together.

MD: Early on in your development, did someone impress upon you how important it was to be able to read?

Earl: I was fortunate to go to the music conservatory in New Orleans on the GI bill.

MD: You could have gone off and played with a band without going to school.

Earl: I think I always knew that I wanted to come to LA and work in the studios. When I asked [Louisiana blues legend] Red Tyler what he was going to do, he said he was going to music school and said, "Why don't you?" I said, "Everybody tells me I'm the best drummer in town." He said, "Yeah, you are, but you don't know what you're doing." I realized he was right, so I went to music school. I would never have had the career I had if I hadn't gone to school.

MD: Can you talk about your favorite bass

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players you've worked with?

Earl: Ray Brown, Red Callender, and Carol Kaye on Fender, because she never played upright. Abe Laboriel is another great Fender bass player.

MD: What makes a bass player great?

Earl: One who can play the time exquisitely, because, for example, when you're playing with a big band and it sounds like everybody is in perfect time, that's not so, because it will vary infinitesimally. But if the bass player is continuing straight ahead with the time, when the drums leave the rhythm to play figures with the brass, it makes all the difference. There has to be something solid to come back to.

MD: Speaking of favorites, have you had a favorite drum over the years?

Earl: The Yamahas that I'm playing now are fantastic. They're stronger and need fewer adjustments. It used to be that I would have to constantly change my drums to suit the music, especially for film work. The Yamahas are the most versatile instrument I've ever played.

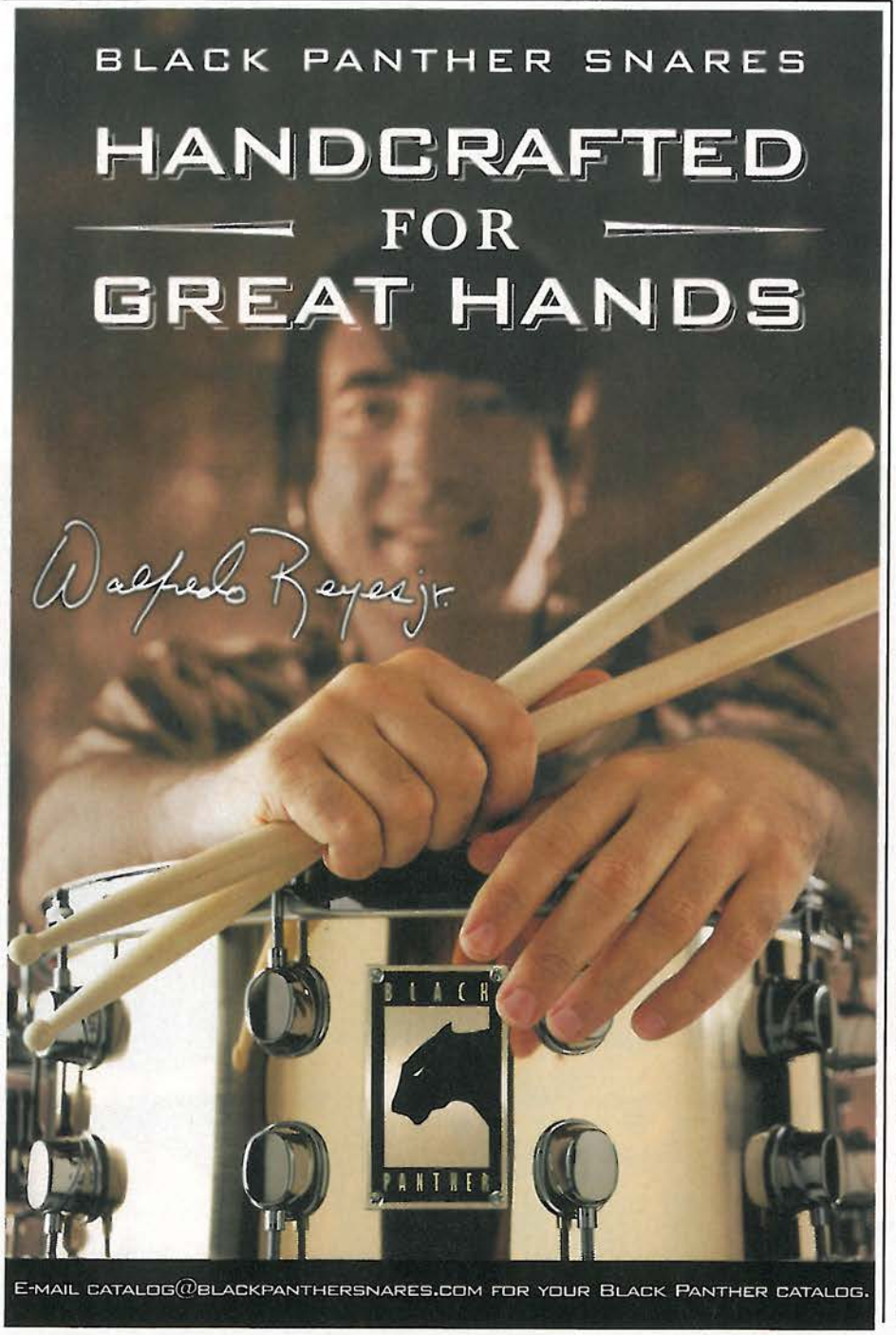
MD: Favorite snare drum?

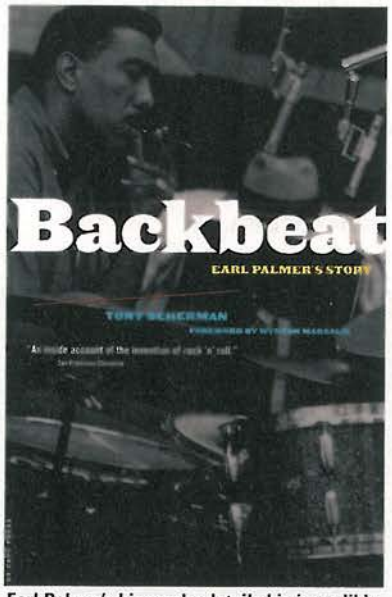
Earl: I always used a Ludwig metal snare drum, until Yamaha came out with one. I always preferred a metal snare because you don't have to tighten the drum up too tight to get a bright, higher-pitched sound.

MD: Have you had a favorite cymbal?

Earl: I've been endorsing Zildjians for ages. I don't remember what any other cymbal sounds like. There's one that I got within the last four or five years from John DeChristopher at Zildjian, and it's the most perfect cymbal I've ever played. It has a sound that I'd been looking for. It's so versatile. It's an 18" K Custom Flat Top ride with three rivets. It's a wonderful sound.

MD: Let's talk about some of the amazing artists you've worked with. How about Frank Sinatra?





Earl Palmer's biography details his incredible career in music.

Earl: My first meeting with him was when we did an album that Neal Hefti wrote the arrangements for. That's another of my favorite albums—*Sinatra And Swingin' Brass.* I walked into the session wearing a Sy Devore alpaca sweater that was royal purple, and Sinatra said, "You know, that sweater ought to be mine because I'm the royal purple around here." I said, "Bull. This cost me $44. They'll give you one if you walk in and ask for it." He hit the floor laughing and never forgot it.

Frank was dynamite. You could tell how he respected the musicians. He knew the song when he came in. He would familiarize himself with where to come in and

where to lay out. After that, he'd say, "Let's roll one," and we'd record. If the producer said, "Frank, I think we need another one," he'd say, "No we don't." If he liked it, that's the way it was, first take.

MD: How about Barbra Streisand?

Earl: I did her *Stoney End* album. One thing I hated about that date was the producer, Richard Perry. He just wasn't a very nice person. It's not that you want the man you're working for to kiss your butt, but you want respect. But Streisand was great. When she felt good, she wanted to go on and on. It would be 3:30 or 4:00 in the morning, and a lot of us had 8:00 or 9:00 calls the next day. She said, "Can we take a little break and do another session?" That's good money, starting a session at 3:00 in the morning. But I said, "I don't want no more money, I wanna go home." I coined that phrase.

Man, Streisand can sing. She's one singer, outside of Sarah Vaughan, who can vocally do no wrong, at least for me. And I loved to play ballads with her. She'd put tears in my eyes.

MD: Since you're originally from New Orleans, can you describe what that style of drumming is all about?

Earl: It's drumming with a predominant bass drum feel. If you listen to drummers from New Orleans, you can hear them using their bass drum a little bit differently, which came from the Dixieland bands. A lot of the guys from New Orleans use that, intertwined with jazz playing. With Herlin Riley [Wynton Marsalis], you can hear a lot of bass drum in his playing. He's awesome. Kids should listen to those old Dixieland drummers to hear how they utilized the bass drum. It's hard to explain a feeling.

MD: When you did your first session with Dave Bartholomew, how did you know how to record?

Earl: [laughs] We just sat down, played, and the engineer recorded it. There was no method of how to record then. We just sat down and played, like we were doing a gig. But there was some common sense about it, too. We played in such a way as to not be too loud on record.

MD: Recording is very different from playing live, though. Can you explain the difference?

Earl: First of all, there's a big difference between playing live, playing on a record, and playing for a film. Live, you're more at ease and can play whatever you want. If you're playing on a record, you have to be able to play what the music needs. But you have a little more room in that setting than you do when you're recording a film soundtrack. In that setting, you have to be exact. There's also no extra time when you're recording for film. You can't make mistakes. On a record, there's a little more time to experiment.

Of course, I've seen projects where they take two months to make an album, or they go away for vacation and come back and finish it. Back in the day, we had to make an album in three hours, and the record company hated if we ran overtime. Back then, the union was too scared to enforce the overtime rules. Now, all the rules are enforced because the unions banded together.

MD: Is that what spurred your decision to work for the union? *[In the '80s, Palmer served two terms as secretary-treasurer for the Los Angeles musicians union.]*

Earl: I decided to get involved with the

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Earl Palmer

union when Vangelis won the Oscar for "Chariots Of Fire." He played the entire score on electronic instruments, and I thought, The handwriting is on the wall. You know producers are going to prostitute that to the max and not use musicians. It got worse when certain drummers started prostituting themselves by recording licks for engineers who would use them to create drum tracks. I thought that was rotten. Guys were trying to break into the studio scene, and then someone does something like that? That would put drummers out of work. I got involved with the union because I wanted to do something that was positive and constructive for musicians. And when I was asked to run for office, I won.

MD: Can you talk about some of your other career highlights?

Earl: One musical highlight that comes to mind was when Louie Bellson called me to play for Pearl Bailey's show. Along with Buddy Rich, Louie Bellson was someone I idolized. I remember when I went to see him play for the first time and he was playing with two bass drums. I was having enough trouble playing one! I said to my cousin, who came with me to the show, "Let's go." He said, "What are you talkin' about? The concert's not over." I said, "I'm goin' to the lake to throw my drums in." So years later, when Louie picked me to do Pearl's show, I asked, "Louie, why me? There are so many great drummers around, like Shelly Manne," who I also idolized. Louie said, "This show is going to have all kinds of stars on it, and I want someone who can play all kinds of music." That meant a lot to me, coming from him.

Another highlight for me was when Buddy hired me to play on his daughter's album. How can that not be a highlight? Guys I'm idolizing hiring me for something they say they can't do! Her album was a contemporary thing. Buddy could play anything, but that kind of music wasn't something he'd normally play.

MD: What do you know about music at eighty years old that you didn't know as a kid?

Earl: I thought I would know it all by now. What I know about music today, at eighty years old, is that it's always changing.

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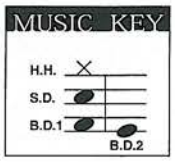
Double Bass Beats

Part 4: Non-Continuous Foot Patterns With Displaced Snare

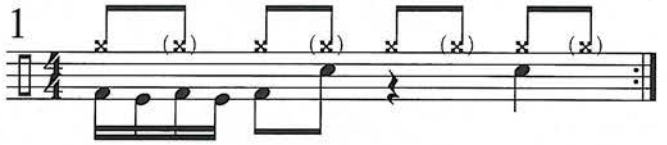
by Rod Morgenstein



Last month's *Rock 'N' Jazz Clinic* introduced non-continuous 8th- and 16th-note double bass patterns with the snare played on either the backbeats, all four quarter notes, or beat 3. Now we'll place the snare on less common parts of the beat. This results in some cool syncopated double bass grooves.

Just like last time, the tempo you choose will determine whether to play a quarter- or 8th-note ride pattern, but experiment with both. (The examples are written with the ride pattern on the hi-hat line, but should also be played on other surfaces including ride cymbal, bell of ride cymbal, and cowbell.) And remember to play all quarter and 8th notes with the main foot and all upbeat 16th notes ("e" and "ah") with the other foot.

1



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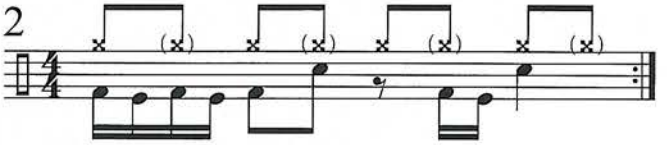

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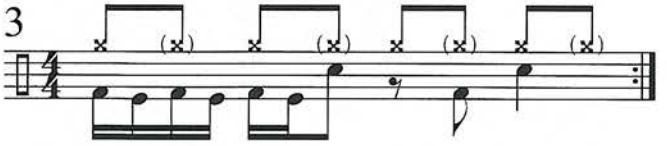

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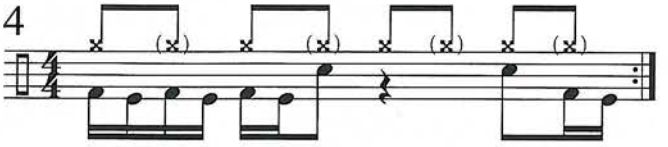

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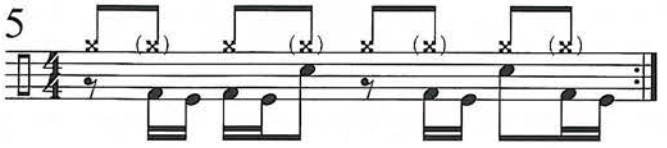

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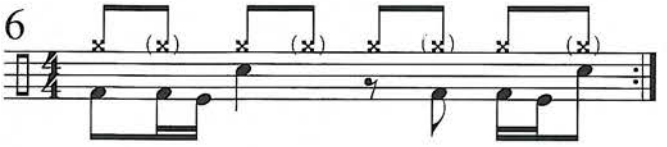

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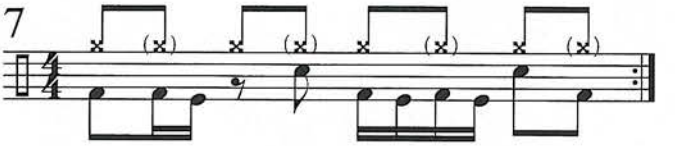

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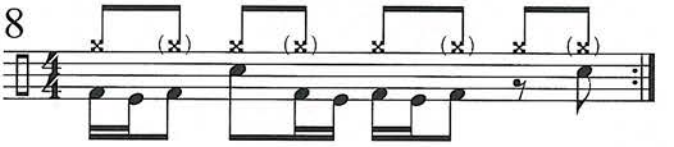

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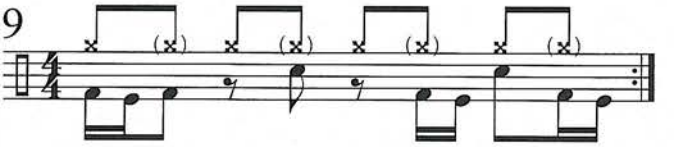

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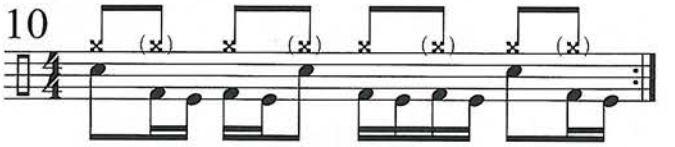

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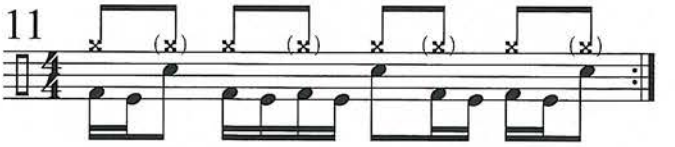

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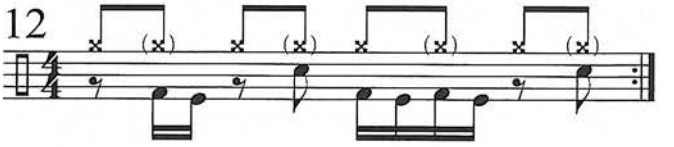

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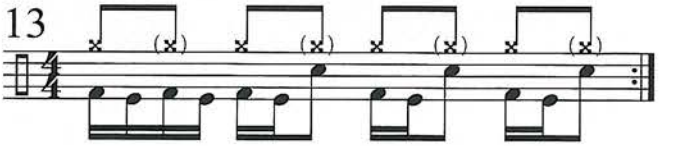
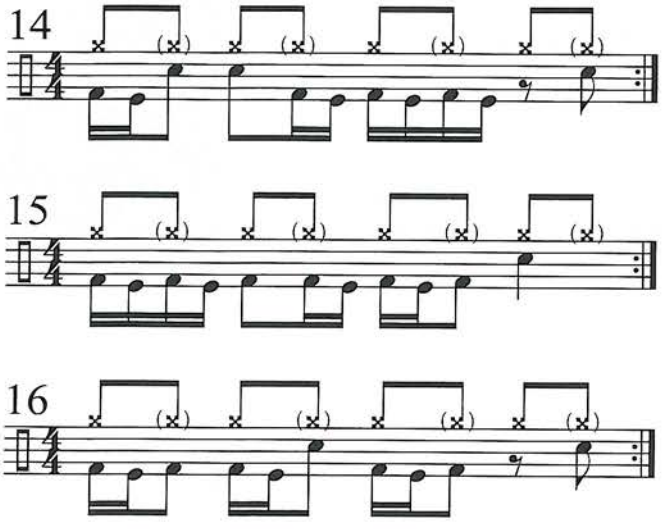
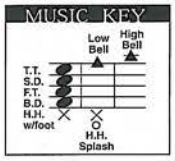




Next month we'll continue moving the snare to more unusual places in the measure, creating even more sophisticated and syncopated double bass grooves. See you then.

In Praise Of The Cowbell

by Robby Ameen



For many of us in various Western cultures, the term "cowbell" stirs up images of a lonesome cow grazing along a hillside in Texas, or maybe Switzerland. Unfortunately, this pastoral image has very little relevance to our concept of contemporary music.

In contemporary music, the cowbell has become an instrument that many drummers add to their setup as an afterthought, a novelty device used for special effect or color. This, however, should not be the case.

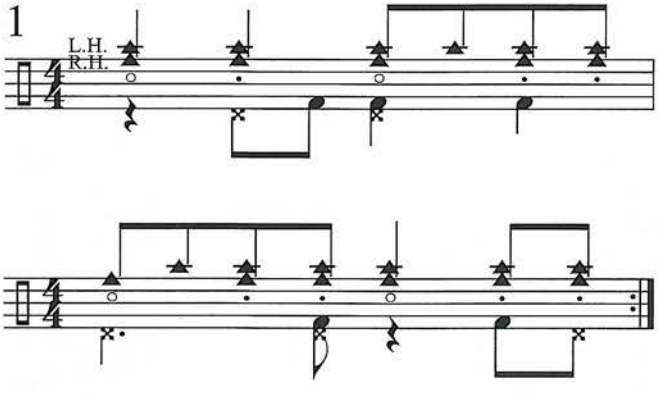
While the drum represents something primordial and viscerally powerful (whether relating to man's first attempt at communication or its ability to make us move), the cowbell is more closely related to the Iron Age and its significance in human history. With the invention of iron tools, we (the human race) perfected our ability to feed ourselves, both in terms of cultivation and the hunt. (Regrettably, we were also able to declare war on each other more effectively, at first with machetes and scimitars, and later with 36-mm shells and uranium-tipped bunker-busting bombs.)

Iron and other metals also proved especially useful for sonic purposes. In the East, gongs announced the arrival of Chinese emperors, while cymbals were heard in the traditional Turkish military bands during the Ottoman Empire. The influence of the latter still resonates as high school bands march in parades down Main Street, USA. In the Western Hemisphere, the African-influenced Santeria and Condomble religions embraced the cowbell and other metallic instruments in their worship ceremonies to the gods (one of which happens to be Ogun, the god of iron and war). So apparently, when it comes to cowbells, gongs, cymbals, and other metallic percussion instruments, our culture owes more to the Afro-Asian tradition than to any other.

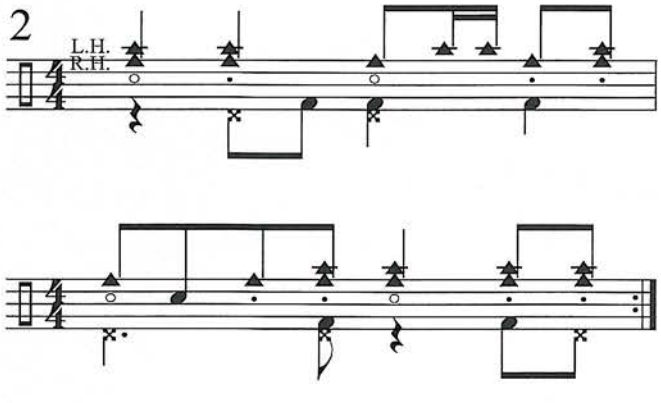
As a centerpiece of many different musical styles from around the globe, the cowbell cements the polyrhythmic counterpoint of the music from Africa to the Caribbean, or Rio de Janeiro to New Orleans. It's the highest voice—the one that cuts through the sonorous roar of the skins. No matter how syncopated its pattern might be, the cowbell is always what we listen to for the groove. This is the case in the marriage between the bongo and timbale-bell patterns in salsa music, the agogo cutting through the huge battery in a samba school, or Elvin Jones' ride cymbal in a duet with John Coltrane, because that was *his* bell. It's even the cowbell, banging out simple quarter notes, that we tune in to when Bob Seger sings, "I like that old time rock and roll!" So whether you're playing one, two, or five bells on your drumset, or just holding one in your hand like a bongocero during the coro of a salsa tune, remember to treat the cowbell as an instrument in its own right.

The following musical examples demonstrate just a few ways to incorporate one or two cowbells into your setup.

Here's a double-bell pattern usually played between the timbalero (timbale player) and bongocero (bongo player) during the chorus of a salsa tune.



Here's one of many variations of the double-bell pattern.



This example is a timba-funk groove that plays off of the timbale-bell pattern.

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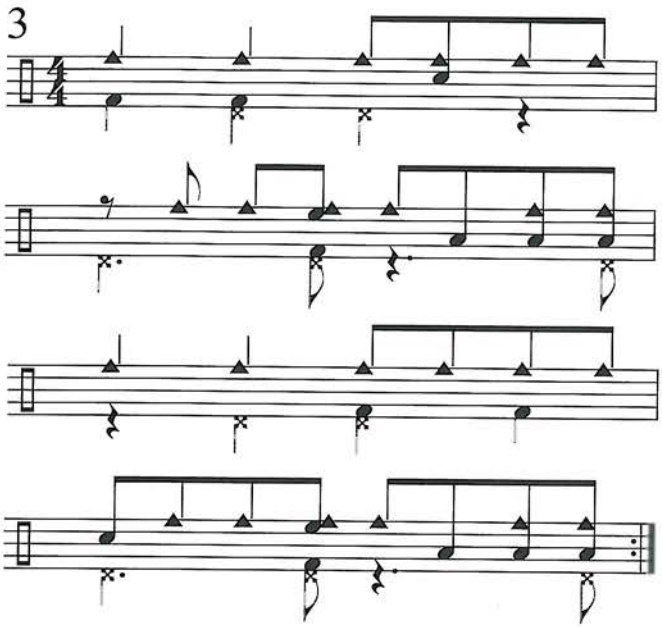
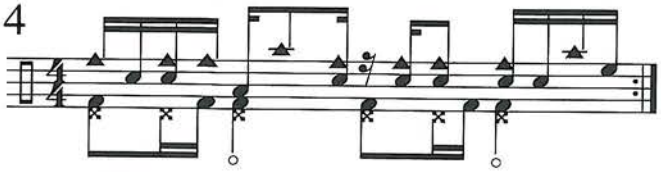


Finally, here's a samba groove that works well on the drumset.

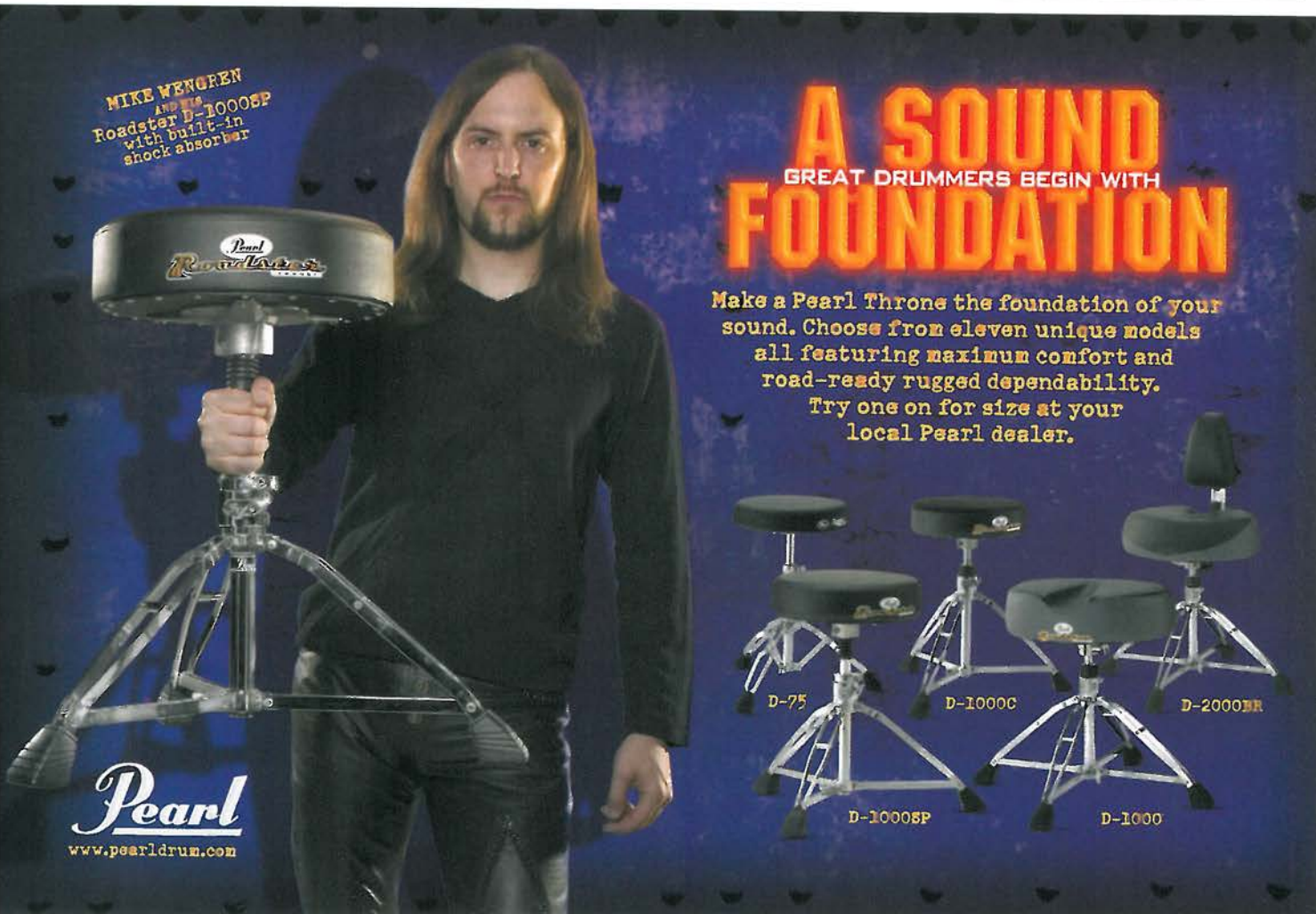
4



These examples barely scratch the surface of the endless possibilities for cowbell patterns. Have fun, and use these examples as building blocks for some of your own unique ideas.

I am indebted to my good friend Ned Sublette, whose newly published work, *Cuba And Its Music: From The First Drums To The Mambo,* is a must-read for anyone playing music in our new millennium.

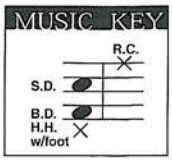
Robby Ameen has recorded with Reuben Blades, Paquito D'Rivera, Dizzy Gillespie, Eddie Palmieri, and Paul Simon. He currently co-leads The El Negro & Robby Band with Horacio Hernandez and is the co-author of the instructional book and CD Funkifying The Clave: Afro Cuban Grooves For Bass And Drums. *For more info, visit his Web site, www.robbyameen.com.*



Chacarera

Argentine Rhythms For Drumset

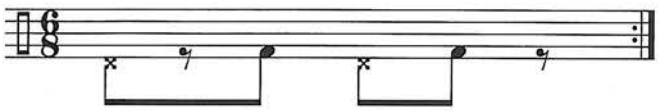
by Marcelo Mira



One of the most important Argentine rhythms is the chacarera, a 6/8 pattern with roots in the northern part of the country. South American artists such as Los Carabajal and Los Chalchaleros frequently incorporate the rhythm into their music, so you might want to check out some of their music for an idea of the feel.

To begin to learn chacarera, you should focus on the pattern created by your left foot on the hi-hat and your right foot on the bass drum. This rhythm resembles the one traditionally played on the bombo (bass drum), the most popular percussion instrument in Argentine folkloric music. Here's the basic foot pattern:

A

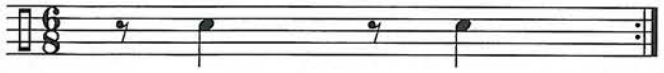


As you get comfortable with this pattern, you'll begin to feel the *soul* of chacarera.

Now that you're familiar with the foot pattern, it's time to learn some of the traditional rhythms that are played on top of the pattern. Here are several variations, which you should play, first with your right hand and then with your left hand.

1

2



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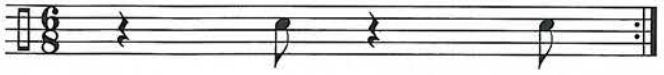

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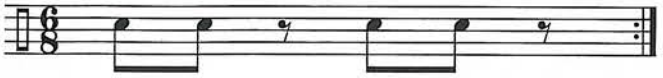

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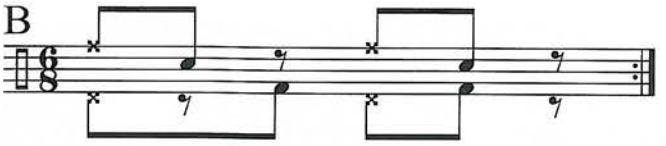
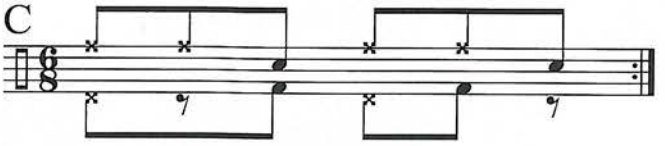
Once you can play the variations, try combining them to create exciting grooves. For instance, here's right hand variation 1 combined with left hand variation 1.

B



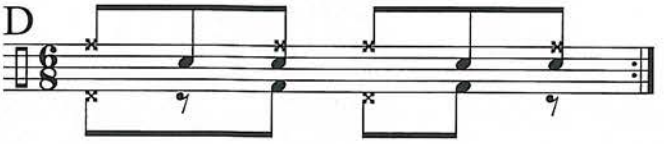
Here's right hand variation 4 with left hand variation 3.

C



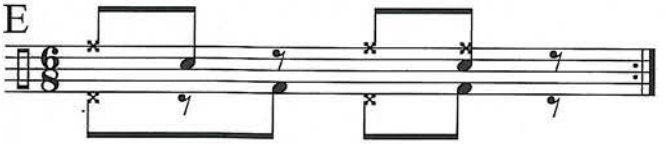
Now try right hand variation 6 with left hand variation 5.

D



The next step is to play a combination of many of the different rhythms. Try these as a starting point:

E



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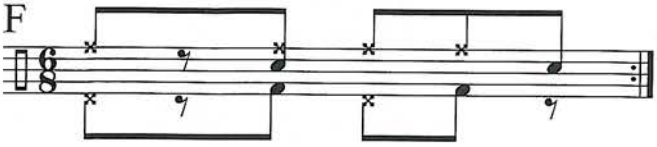

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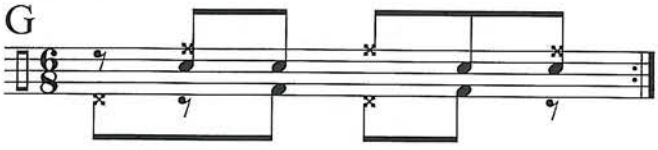

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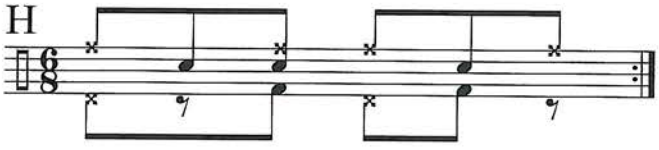

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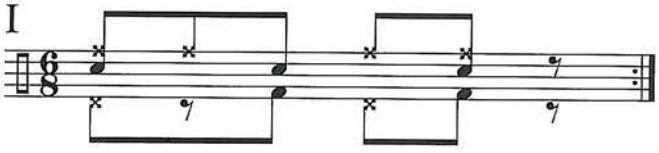

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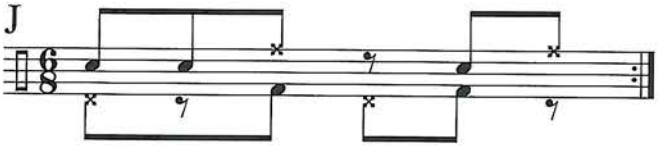

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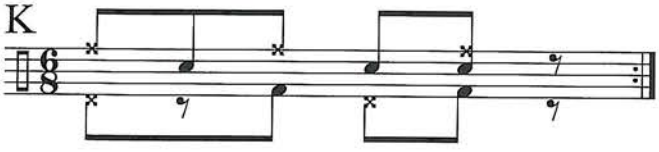

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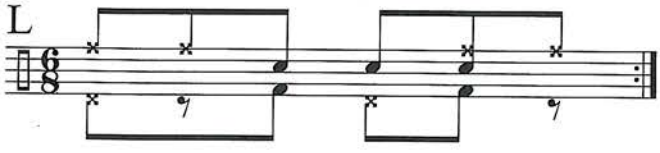

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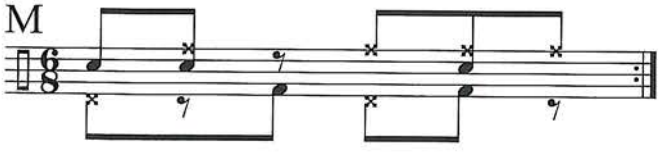
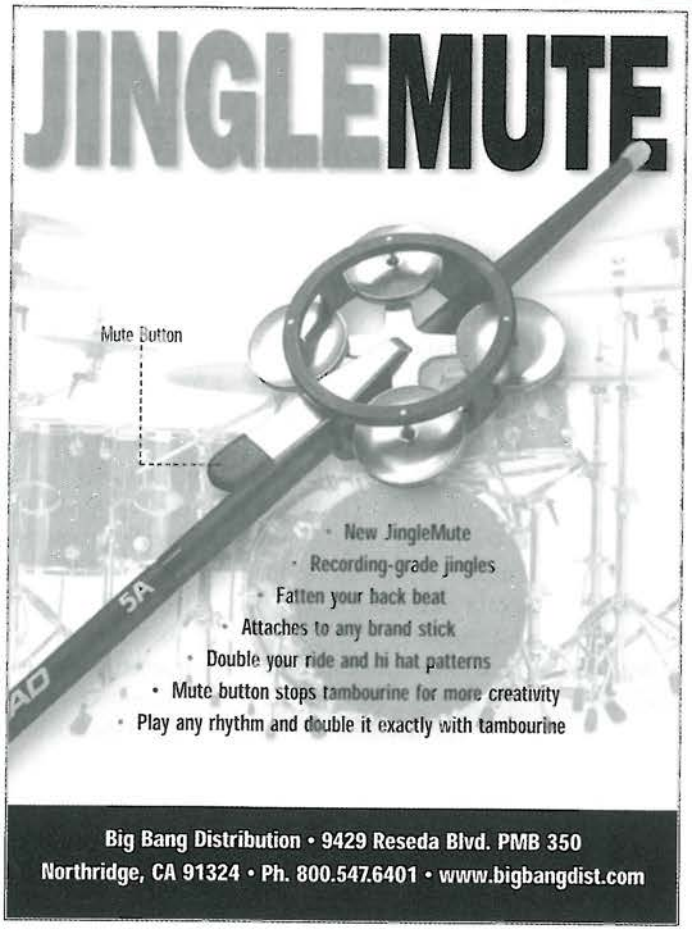


As you can see, the chacarera can be altered in many ways. See what *you* can come up with for it. You're only limited by your imagination!

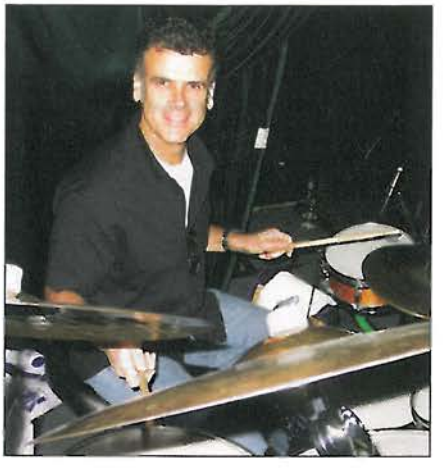


Old-School Grooves

The Lesson Is In The Beats

by David Garibaldi

Editor's note: We are thrilled to welcome back legendary Tower Of Power drummer David Garibaldi as a regular MD *columnist. He suggested the name for this new department,* The Funky Beat. *And like the name implies, it will feature all things funky.*



Two years ago, in preparation for my clinic at PASIC 2003, I went back to my roots and decided to transcribe some of my favorite grooves from "back in the day."

During my early years with Tower Of Power, I would listen to these recordings for many hours, trying to better understand what these great drummers were doing. What follows is some of what I discovered as I prepared for my presentation. It was eye opening to say the least.

I have always known that the period from the late '60s to the early '70s was, for lack of a better term, a rhythmic revolution. As I went through the songs, I listened in amazement at the degree of intelligence and sophistication these drummers possessed.

In those days, as I was developing and trying to find my voice, I really didn't fully comprehend what I was listening to. What I did know was that this music was speaking to my heart. My dream was that one day I would be able to play as well as the drummers on these tracks did. Today, as I again listen, the drumming and the music stand the test of time. It's still fresh and full of creative energy. In fact, the drumming is even greater than I realized.

When it comes to studying the jazz tradition, drummers like Max Roach, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, Roy Haynes, Jack DeJohnette, Art Blakey, Philly Joe Jones, and Papa Jo Jones still define the style. These are some of the greats we look to when we want to learn how to play jazz. Funk drumming, now an established tradition full of history and innovation, can be studied in the same way.

The first players to open my ears to this type of drumming were Nate Jones, Clyde Stubblefield, Jabo Starks, Melvin Parker, and Clayton Filyau (the drummers of James Brown), Gregg Errico (Sly & The Family Stone), James Gadson (Dyke & The Blazers), Rick Marotta (Howard Tate), Bernard Purdie (Aretha Franklin), Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste (The Meters), and Pete DePoe (Redbone).

Historically, there are others who can be included in this list, such as Earl Palmer (Little Richard, Fats Domino) and Al Jackson Jr. (Otis Redding, Al Green). But in this article I'd like to focus on those who had the greatest impact on me personally.

The one notable characteristic of that era was the emphasis on the groove—very few fills, if any at all—and simple song forms with slickly crafted rhythm section parts. Stylistically, the focus was on the three basic components of the drumset: hi-hat, snare drum, and bass drum.

Many of the songs, if not all, have signature drum beats, such as "Cold Sweat," "Cissy Strut," and "Funky Women." Plus, these performances feature one of the greatest drumset innovations, the ghost note.

Even though the style is very part-driven, there is a bit of improvising going on as well, most notably in Clyde Stubblefield's brilliant performance on "I Got The Feelin'," which incidentally was recorded in 1968. To think that he was already playing in this way at that time is astounding. Zigaboo improvises a lot on some of the early Meters recordings, too. But still, the emphasis is on the groove. And remember that in this era, records were made without a click, so the time can be somewhat elastic...human!

In addition to the transcribed parts, you will find metronome markings, who the drummer is, the year the song was recorded, and the recording from which the performance is taken.

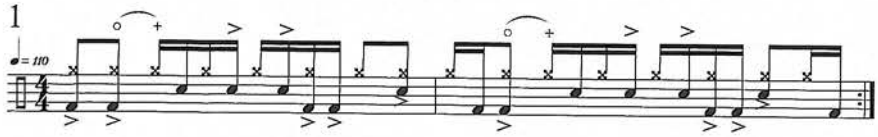
Lame disclaimer: My transcriptions will probably contain some inaccuracies, but are for the most part correct. Technology then was not what it is today, so some of the parts are difficult to distinguish. Call this a work in progress!

Performance Notes

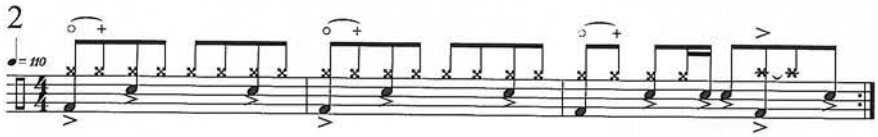
- There is *some* improvisation—the basic idea of each groove is presented.
- When reviewing the recorded performances, listen for the accents and ghosted notes. This is the key to the funk drumming sound. (In the following examples, all unaccented notes are to be ghosted.)
- Practice tip: When learning these grooves, set up only the hi-hat, snare drum, and bass drum—no toms or cymbals. This will help you avoid playing fills and focus only on playing these great beats.

Okay, here we go: "Old-School Grooves!"

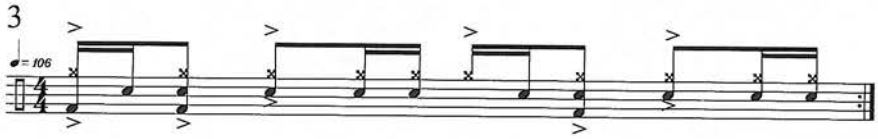
"Give It Up Or Turnit A Loose," James Brown, *Star Time*—Nate Jones, drums. Year: 1968. (Hi-hat, straight 8th notes, no accents.)



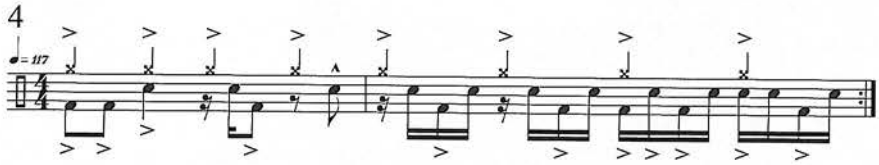
"I Don't Want Nobody To Give Me Nothing (Open Up The Door, I'll Get It Myself)," James Brown, *Star Time*—Clyde Stubblefield, drums. Year: 1969. (This is a three-bar cycle; vocals are in 4/4.)



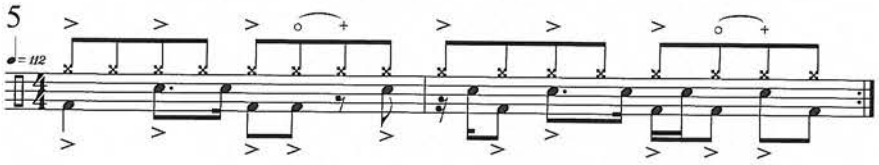
"Soul Power," James Brown, *Star Time*—Jabo Starks, drums. Year: 1971.



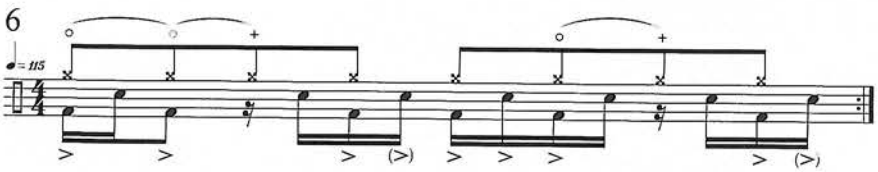
"Mother Popcorn," James Brown, *Star Time*—Clyde Stubblefield, drums. Year: 1969.

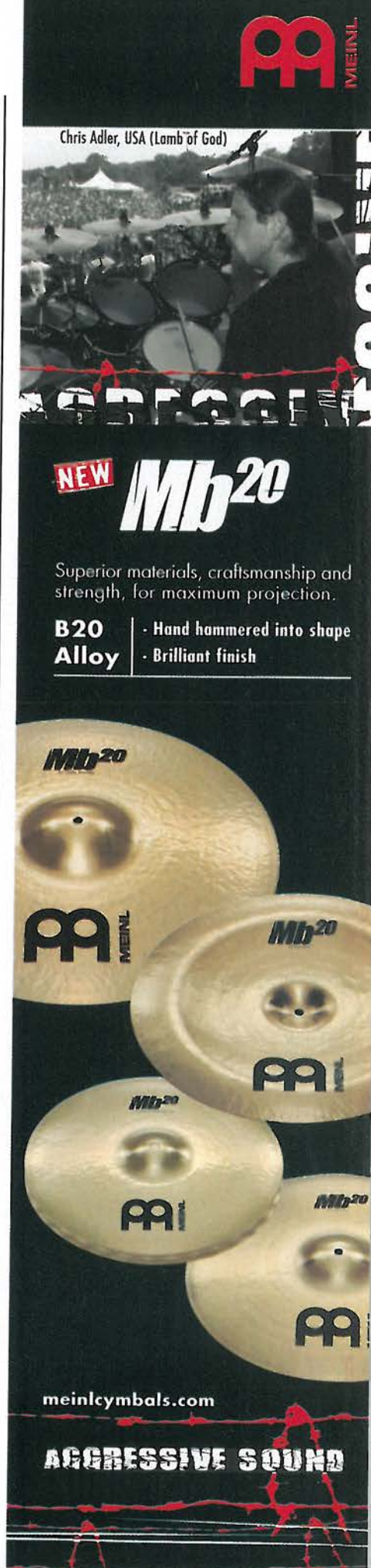


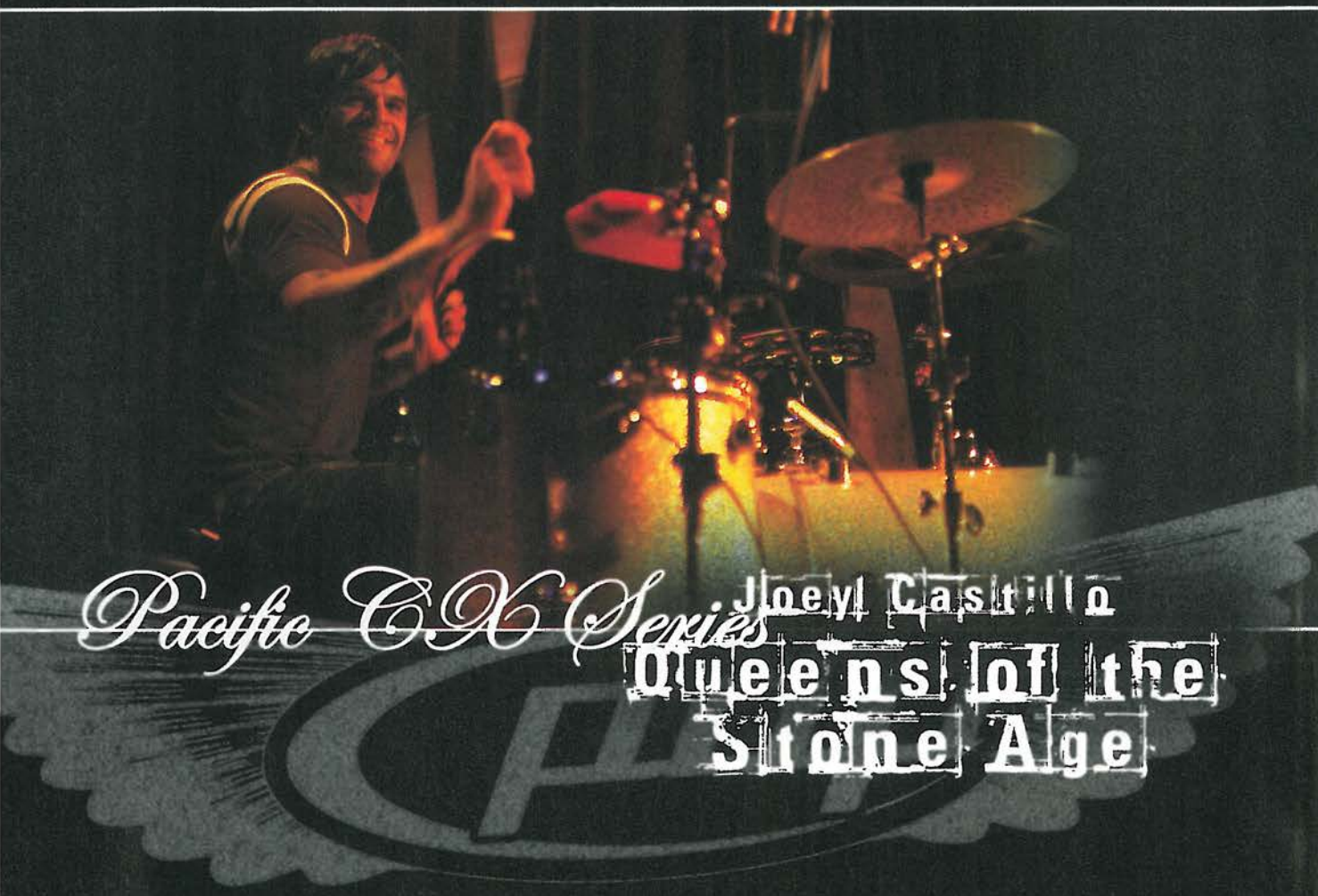
"Cold Sweat," James Brown, *Star Time*—Clyde Stubblefield, drums. Year: 1967.



"Funky Women," Maceo & All The King's Men, *Doing Their Own Thing*—Melvin Parker, drums. Year: 1970. (Hi-hat isn't accented; it's played evenly. LH accents in parentheses are played randomly.)







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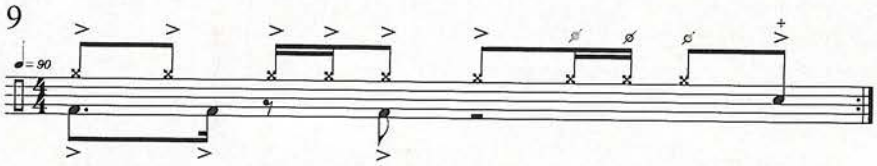
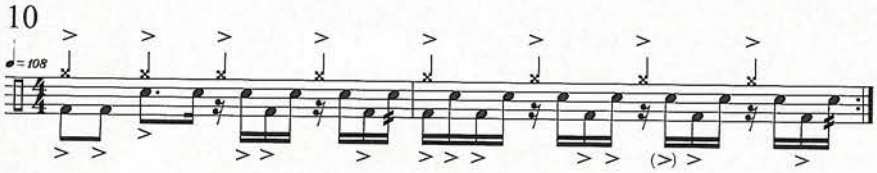
"Cissy Strut," The Meters, *Funkify Your Life: The Meters Anthology*—Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste, drums. Year: 1969.

"She's A Burglar" (chorus out), Howard Tate, *Howard Tate*—Rick Marotta, drums. Year: 1972.

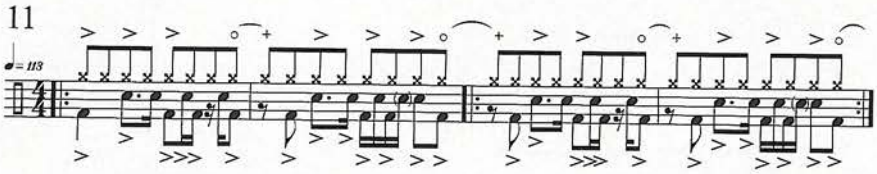
"Slippin' Into Darkness," War, *The Best Of War And More*—Harold Brown, drums. Year: 1972.



"Thank You (Falletin Me Be Mice Elf Agin)," Maceo & All The King's Men, *Doing Their Own Thing*—Melvin Parker, drums. Year: 1970.



"Let A Woman Be A Woman, Let A Man Be A Man," Dyke & The Blazers, *So Sharp!*—James Gadson, drums. Year: 1968–70. (The notes in parentheses are alternates. They can be played or not. I wasn't able to hear it well enough to tell if this was a ghosted snare drum or hi-hat. I went with the snare based on studying Gadson's vocabulary in other songs.)



"Anti-Love Song," Betty Davis, *Betty Davis*—Gregg Errico, drums. Year: 1971–72.

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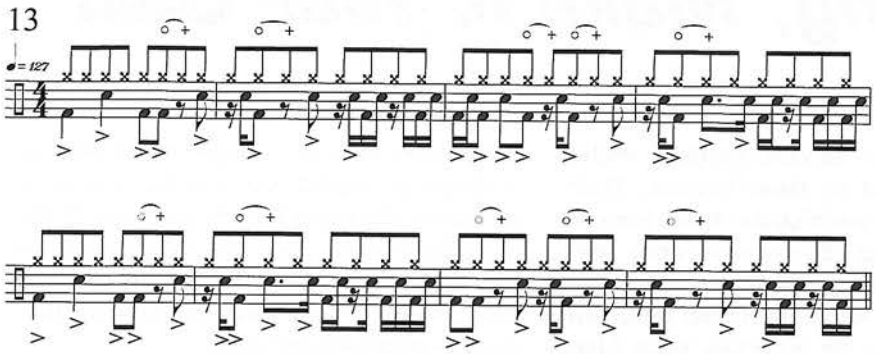
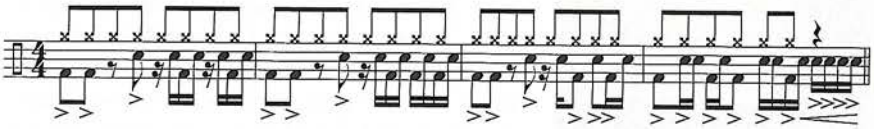
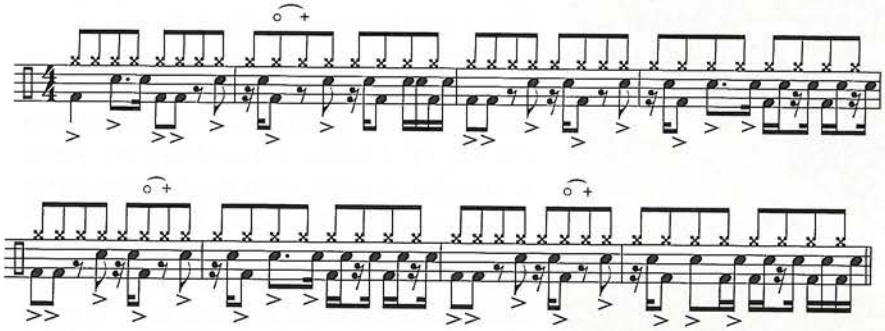
"I Got The Feelin'", James Brown, *Star Time*—Clyde Stubblefield, drums. Year: 1968. (Bars 1–8: Continuous improvising through several variations.)



Bridge 1: Changes slightly each time bridge is played.



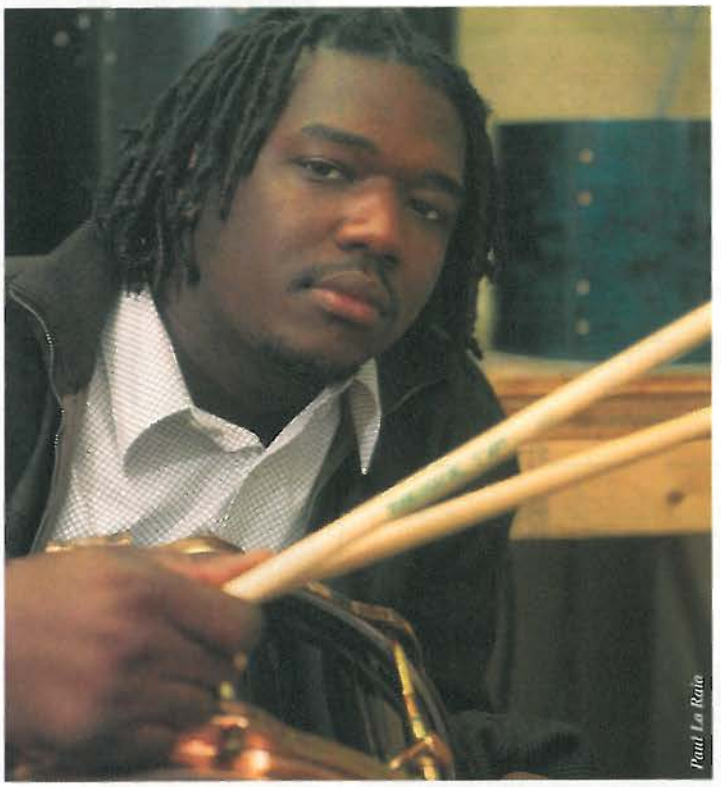
Chorus out: Bars 1–8



Take Something, Make It Your Own

by Rodney Green

Young jazz drummers often exhibit playing styles that are directly influenced by their heroes. Their ideas can be attributed to a particular time period, recording, or live performance. Every drummer who has ever picked up a drumstick, myself included, has found musical influence in this way. We learn by example, and what better examples do we have than Elvin Jones, Roy Haynes, Tony Williams, and Billy Higgins, just to name a few?


Paul La Raia

"It's very important to remember that all of our musical heroes were at one point influenced by other great musicians."

Musicians learn by example, but we tend to overlook this valuable lesson when we think of our heroes. We forget that, in the words of the great Miles Davis, "First you imitate, then you innovate." It's very important to remember that all of our musical heroes were at one point influenced by other great musicians.

The first time I heard Al Foster play, he knocked me out. He has *so* many sounds that distinguish him as one of the great innovators of our craft. Whether it's his astounding independence, or the recent variation to his cymbal sound, most jazz drummers have something that they love about Al Foster. In terms of influence, I was shocked to find that Al doesn't sit at home listening to the master drummers of Senegal or great classical composers like Ravel and Bartok. Instead, he listens to classic recordings of Art Taylor, Lex Humphries, and Billy Higgins.

If you listen to Foster on the Booker Ervin recording *The Thing To Do* or the Donald Byrd records *Live At The Half Note* and *Fuego*, you can hear the influence of Lex Humphries. Foster is engaging all of his limbs in a complex dialog that never inhibits the soloist. This is something he got straight from Lex. But Foster's influences don't stop there. On Charlie Haden's newly released recording, *The Montreal Tapes*, you can clearly hear the influence of Max Roach on Foster, especially in his solos.

Bill Stewart is another drummer who has taken lessons from classic recordings. Stewart's complex palette of cymbal colors is clearly influenced by Tony Williams and Jack DeJohnette, while his crisp, clean snare sound comes from Roy Haynes. It's also apparent that Max Roach and Ed Blackwell directly influenced him. For example, check out some of Stewart's solos where he plays melodies on the toms over a dotted quarter-note bass drum ostinato, as in the tune "Snide Remarks" from his first solo record.

The first time I heard Bill play, in 1996, I thought he was pulling these techniques out of thin air. I was relieved to find out that he developed these ideas from a variety of influences and worked to make them his own. You can hear Max

Roach playing similar ideas in his classic solo piece "The Drum Also Waltzes," found on the album *Deeds Not Words*.

Jeff Watts, easily one of the most influential drummers of the past twenty years, was also influenced by a number of sources. Interestingly, when Watts met Wynton and Branford Marsalis at the Berklee College of Music, he was not on the road to becoming a jazz drummer. After he began playing with them, however, he found himself immersed in the jazz experience, drawing influence from straight-ahead jazz drummers such as Billy Higgins and Ben Riley more than from fusion drummers like Narada Michael Walden and Harvey Mason. Watts also found the drummer who helped shape his voice into what we now know as "Jeff Watts." This was Elvin Jones.

Early Jeff Watts recordings show a clear 1980s Tony Williams influence, as well as an influence from the fusion drummers of that time. On his first recordings with Wynton Marsalis, he played big drums and big cymbals with size 2B drumsticks. Eventually, under Wynton's encouragement, Watts started searching for different sounds, scaling down to a four- or five-piece Sonor set. He also got some K Zildjians, similar to the ones that Elvin made famous, and he slowly began to change his style.

Watts studied Jones' role in the rhythm section, his unique ride cymbal beat, and his innovative use of triplets, eventually incorporating them into his own ideas. Compare Wynton's *Black Codes From The Underground* and Branford's *Crazy People's Music* to notice the difference between Jeff's earlier playing and his drumming after studying Elvin Jones. The Wynton album shows an early Jeff with a bigger, "Tony-ish" drum sound, while the later recording reveals Jeff with his own unique voice.

No article about drummers' influences would be complete without mentioning Kenny Washington. Washington was a deejay for both Sirius Satellite and jazz-radio institution WBGO, and has often been referred to as the "Jazz Maniac." He has studied records his entire life, amassing a collection of thousands of LPs and CDs.

Because of Kenny's extensive record collection and years of experience, he can pull ideas from any number of sources. The two influences that stand out the most are Papa Jo Jones and Philly Joe Jones. Kenny has a real connection to these two men, and their influence is obvious when you hear him play.

Papa Jo Jones had one of the prettiest brush sounds. He was able to swing and take great solos using only brushes (as on *The Essential Jo Jones*). Kenny studied Papa Jo's playing and has a very similar sound and approach. Check out Kenny on the Tommy Flanagan tune "Mean Streets," from the record *The Jazz Poet*, for an example of Jo Jones' influence. And when Kenny solos, he's at his best when he starts on the snare drum, using rudiments á la Philly Joe Jones. He's the best in the business when it comes to knowing and executing this classic bebop vocabulary.

These great drummers did what everyone else has to do in order to develop their own unique playing style: They listened, learned, and applied ideas from their favorite artists, eventually defining the sound we hear today.

Now, I know what you're thinking, but don't worry. As long as you're not trying to be a clone of another drummer, doing this same type of study will only serve as a means to an end. I have never mistaken Al Foster for Max Roach, nor have I ever mistaken Bill Stewart for Tony Williams. But knowing that even the greats have their influences, we are reassured that a similar kind of discovery is possible for us all.

Rodney Green has worked with Terence Blanchard, Michael Brecker, Betty Carter, Herbie Hancock, Charlie Haden, Diana Krall, Wynton Marsalis, Christian McBride, Dianne Reeves, and many others. For more info on Rodney, check out his Web site, www.rodneygreenmusic.com.

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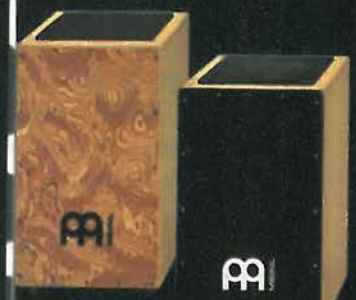
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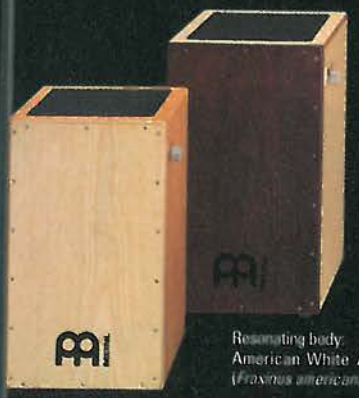
Resonating body: Rubber Wood (*Hevea brasiliensis* Muell.-Arg.)
Finish: Matt
Frontplate: Premium fiberglass
Resonating body: Rubber Wood (*Hevea brasiliensis* Muell.-Arg.)
Features: Built in sizzle effect, Padded sitting surface, Wide sound options
Includes: Allen wrench

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Resonating body: Rubber Wood (*Hevea brasiliensis* Muell.-Arg.)
Material: Frontplate: American White Ash (*Fraxinus americana* L.)
Features: Adjustable top corners, Internal, adjustable snare wires, Padded sitting surface, Wide sound options
Finish: Matt

Fully adjustable snare wires
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When It's Time To Go

Considering A Career Change

by Joel Rosenblatt

"What are you thinking? Are you *crazy*?" These thoughts kept going through my mind. But in the end I came to the only conclusion I could: It was time to go.

Since December of 1991 I had been a sideman in a very successful band. I decided to leave in December of 2003. In my case the band was Spyro Gyra, but you can insert any band as the subject of this article. It could be your band, or a band you've read about. In fact, the same concept applies to anybody with *any* kind of job. After a while, the relationship between you and your employer might stop being mutually beneficial. At that point it's up to you to determine whether you want to stay or leave. Both decisions offer advantages and disadvantages.

Determining Factors

What leads up to a decision to leave a band? It's usually a combination of many things, like words that stay with you, and situations (musical and not) that affect you personally as well as how you play.

Being able to play music—to communicate in a language that transcends all cultures—is a very powerful experience. Think of the first time you did something that was recognized by someone outside your circle—like receiving an award, or getting your first hit in Little League. It's a great feeling. Feelings like that are part of what drives us drummers to express ourselves through music. The experience can be tremendously gratifying. But then again, sometimes it isn't.

Confused? I was too.

Change is good, and sometimes you just have to clear your plate in order to make a space for something new to fill it.

There are, of course, advantages to being in a band. One is job security—a guarantee of a certain amount of work. Some bands offer the Holy Grail for drummers: a drum tech. (This is a *big* perk.) These advantages can sometimes offset the negative aspects of a job. But if the balance gets too out of whack, it's a bad situation for both parties. You won't want to be there, and your attitude may reflect that fact.

Any touring musician is familiar with the joke that goes, "How much do you get paid for this gig?" The punchline is, "I play the gig for free. I get paid to *travel*." Considering airline travel these days, that statement applies now more than ever. After you've flown for thirty hours to play a forty-five-minute set (which is common when you're playing festivals that feature multiple bands), the gig had *better* recharge your batteries. Otherwise, what's the point?

Ah, but then again, a band is often a tight unit with good chemistry, and everything is *comfortable*. Well, being comfortable is nice, but it can encourage apathy. That was the situation I found myself in.

Motivation And Evolution

Music is #1 with me, and *not* wanting to play drums was a bad feeling that worried me. I hadn't really practiced in ten years. I just wasn't inspired. I'm not one of those guys who can practice for the sake of practicing. However, having something new to work on is very motivating. I needed to involve myself with other projects to get my juices flowing again. I needed to be in a little more dangerous situation. I needed to be *hungry* again.

This is the artist's plight. Where you are is never where you want to be. That is what drives us, keeps us searching, improving, and creating—which benefits us *and* our audience. We need to continually evolve and move forward. Some people can do it on their own. I usually need some external motivation.

I need to be in a setting that challenges me, motivates me, and allows me the freedom to grow. For exactly that reason, I've been smart about business over the years. I've paid my debts and avoided getting in over my head financially. I didn't want to be trapped in a situation where I *couldn't* leave because I had created a certain lifestyle for myself.

The Time Comes

I bit my tongue for a long time while I weighed the advantages and disadvantages I've discussed here. Finally, the balance shifted, and I gave my notice. There is no bad blood; it was always my choice to stay or go. After twelve years, it was a scary but incredibly freeing decision.

So now I find myself driving cross-country, partly to take some time to do what I've always wanted to do, partly to clear my head, partly to work my last gigs. I look forward to getting back home, and to beginning to reinvent myself. I plan to start a practice regimen, and I'm looking forward to creating new relationships with musicians I've always wanted to work with.

Change is good, and sometimes you just have to clear your plate in order to make a space for something new to fill it. Gigs and money will come and go, but self-respect and happiness stay with you forever. Follow your heart!

Joel Rosenblatt has played with Steve Khan, Spyro Gyra, Oz Noy, Michel Camilo, Pure Prairie League, Matt "Guitar" Murphy, Dave Samuels, Freddy Jackson, Airto & Flora Purim, and many others. For more information, visit www.joel-rosenblatt.com.

A Fusion Primer
Examining A Seminal Style

by Richie Morales

Musicians and non-musicians alike are generally most familiar with the popular music of their formative years, whether it be big band, doo-wop, soul, British Invasion, or classic rock. Today, popular music consists of many different elements, including odd time signatures, ethnic rhythms, advanced instrumental technique, and a general cross-pollination of styles. A young musician with a handle on what went on musically five or ten years ago has a good memory. If he knows what went on fifteen to twenty years ago, he is knowledgeable. Any further back than that and he's probably a music history major!

In this article I'm going to give some historical background and perspective on a style of music that originated roughly thirty-five years ago, and since then has been highly influential on several generations of musicians. That style is jazz-fusion, or more simply, fusion music.

As the name suggests, fusion is an attempt to blend different styles of music in an effort to come up with a new style. In its original form, fusion was generally thought of as a blend of jazz improvisation, rock energy and amplification, and some classical harmonic influences.

History

Attempts to fuse jazz and classical music date back to the early 1950s and The Modern Jazz Quartet. Leader John Lewis composed music based on jazz that was combined with the baroque inventions of Bach. During that same decade, composers Horace Silver and Ray Charles came up with a successful fusion of jazz and R&B, which was called "soul jazz."

In the late 1960s and early '70s, trumpeter/composer Miles Davis's experiments with electronic instrumentation (guitar, bass, and keyboards) was a fountainhead of the jazz-fusion genre, resulting in such seminal works as *Miles In The Sky*, *Live At The Fillmore*, *In A Silent Way*, *Bitches Brew*, *On The Corner*, and *Tribute To Jack Johnson*, just to name a few. Compositionally, the music consisted of modal improvisations over minimal chord structures, using rock energy and amplification combined with rhythms from popular urban funk and R&B music. Brazilian, African, and Asian percussion, situated behind a front line of trumpet and saxophone, augmented the conventional rhythm section of drums and bass. This configuration has since become the standard for fusion or "contemporary jazz" groups.

Many members of Miles' '60s/'70s ensembles went on to become leading exponents of the jazz fusion movement at its creative and commercial best. Notable among these are Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, Joe Zawinul, Wayne Shorter, and John McLaughlin. Other sidemen from Miles' 1980s period have also distinguished themselves as bandleaders in the contemporary jazz tradition. I have had the pleasure of working with a number of them, including Mike Stern, Bill Evans, Marcus Miller, and Bob Berg.

Miles' Drummers

The list of Miles Davis's drummers during his fusion period starts with Tony Williams, whose later solo records with his own group, Lifetime, were light years ahead of the pack in terms of concept and energy. The list goes on with Jack DeJohnette, Lenny White, Billy Cobham, Billy Hart, and Al Foster, along with percussionists Airto Moreira and Don Alias—a gallery of all-time greats. These gentlemen have had a profound influence on drumming that cuts across stylistic boundaries. And, with the exception of the late Tony Williams, they continue to make great music today.

The Music They Played

Many innovative fusion groups broke musical ground in the mid- to late 1970s. Among them were Return To Forever, Weather Report, Mahavishnu Orchestra, and The Brecker Brothers Band. Stylistically, their music varied from being extremely complex to being groove-oriented and repetitive. The drumming was aggressive, demanding chops and endurance to burn.

The music also drew from a broad palette of cultural sources. Afro-Cuban and Brazilian elements, as well as the odd time signatures and harmonic modes of Asian and Eastern European (Balkan) music, were utilized. Some might say *over*-utilized, to the point of becoming clichéd. Still, many of these groups achieved artistic and mainstream success. Some are still working today under the same name or in versions descended from the original.

The Inevitable Backlash

Some rock musicians—and fans of popular music in general—dislike fusion music for its emphasis on highly developed instrumental technique and often-complex forms. Punk rock developed in part as a backlash against "techno rock" or "art rock," which were forms of rock music closely akin to fusion. Traditionalists of the rock, jazz, and "serious" music camps (and I say "serious" with tongue planted firmly in cheek) regard fusion as a blatant move towards commercialism and think of it as a creatively barren genre. To some extent these criticisms are

valid. Nevertheless, some important, high-quality, innovative music has come out of this movement.

World Beat

A category of fusion that blends many different cultural influences and has at times met with enormous commercial success is called world beat music. A specific culture might be mined for its musical resources by an artist or composer, as in the case of Paul Simon going to South Africa seeking inspiration for *Graceland*, and to Brazil for *Rhythm Of The Saints*, which are two of his classic albums. Other examples include Sting working with North African and Arabic pop musical elements, and Peter Gabriel incorporating West African pop elements.

These collaborations resulted in main-

Recommended Listening

Start Your Fusion Collection Here!

Tony Williams Lifetime, *Emergency*. A white-hot performance from Williams and his trio of Larry Young on organ and a fresh face at the time on guitar, John McLaughlin. Marred by a poor-quality recording that somehow adds to the vibe.

Miles Davis, *Bitches Brew*. Miles' finishing school for future jazz-fusion icons. Powered by Jack DeJohnette and Lenny White in tandem in this expanded ensemble format.

Miles Davis, *On The Corner*. No credits given on Miles' funky nod to Sly Stone. Could Billy Hart and Al Foster be on this electric urban landscape?

Miles Davis, *Live Evil*. Miles gets edgy. Billy Cobham and Jack DeJohnette burn on this live recording.

Mahavishnu Orchestra, *The Inner Mounting Flame*. This group's debut album blew everyone away on sheer energy alone, never mind the odd time signatures and blazing technique. Billy Cobham plays with fire, power, and precision.

Return To Forever, *Romantic Warrior*. The final recording in the life of this archetypal fusion group. Lenny White in high-powered Swiss rudimental mode will put you in the shed permanently.

Chick Corea, *The Leprechaun*. This is the granddaddy of Corea's Elektric Band. Steve Gadd and Anthony Jackson are in sync. A treasure trove of ideas from the Steve Gadd lexicon.

Herbie Hancock, *Head Hunters*. Slick, slippery, and swinging. Innovative funk from Mister Hi-Hat: Harvey Mason. Check out the snare sound and the "wet" toms.

Weather Report, *Heavy Weather*. A groundbreaking jazz fusion record that also achieved huge crossover success for this highly influential group. Alex Acuña on drums and Manolo Badrena on percussion bring a propulsive Afro-Cuban flavor to this classic. Oh...and Jaco Pastorius only changed the way everyone played electric bass forever after.

The Brecker Brothers Band, *Heavy Metal Bebop*. A high-energy, rock-flavored assault from Terry Bozzio on this live set of Brecker Brothers classics. Check out "Squids" and "Some Skunk Funk."

The Brecker Brothers Band, *Straphangin'*. This was the last recording made by the group's first incarnation. The author is on drums, and Don Alias, Manolo Badrena, and Sammy Figueroa are on percussion. Gritty funk, swing, and Latin grooves. A snapshot of New York jazz-funk circa 1980.

stream success on a worldwide level. As such they transcend world beat categorization. Still, they made use of the formula—combining ethnic musical elements with modern studio technology and production values—that's at the core of world beat music.

At times commercial pop sensibility is the driving force of world beat music, such as music for dancing in clubs and raves. At other times the world beat formula is driven by a more ambient, ethereal "new age" esthetic, one that strives to induce a meditative state through the music. An example of this is setting the flute music of indigenous Native American peoples in a lush reverb wash of synthesizers and programmed drums. I actually heard this one on my last vacation in the Southwest.

Another take on world beat music—and one that I have the most personal experience with—is that of improvisational music that draws on the aforementioned formula. The world is getting smaller every day—especially for musicians who tour internationally. First-generation fusion guitarist Al Di Meola is most well known for his flamenco-inspired music. His groups World Sinfonia and The Electric Project (which I performed and recorded with) use Arabic, Greek, and Turkish rhythmic and harmonic material, as well as Argentine tango, European classical, and Afro-Cuban and Brazilian influences, in their presentation.

It's Still Gotta Groove

The trick to pulling off such an eclectic mix of musical styles is to find a common thread that can provide rhythmic continuity throughout. Well, to paraphrase a political slogan of years past: *It's the groove, stupid.* Using the Tresillo Cubano or Cuban triplet, the baiao samba from Brazil, or various Afro 6/8 and rumba rhythms, I provided rhythmic focal points over which percussionist Arto Tuncboyaciyan and conguero Gumbi Ortiz could layer rhythmic textures from their respective cultural backgrounds. The resulting mix on the Di Meola album *Kiss My Axe* was dense, fiery, and propulsive—just what you'd expect of a mix from the Middle East, Cuba, and The Bronx.

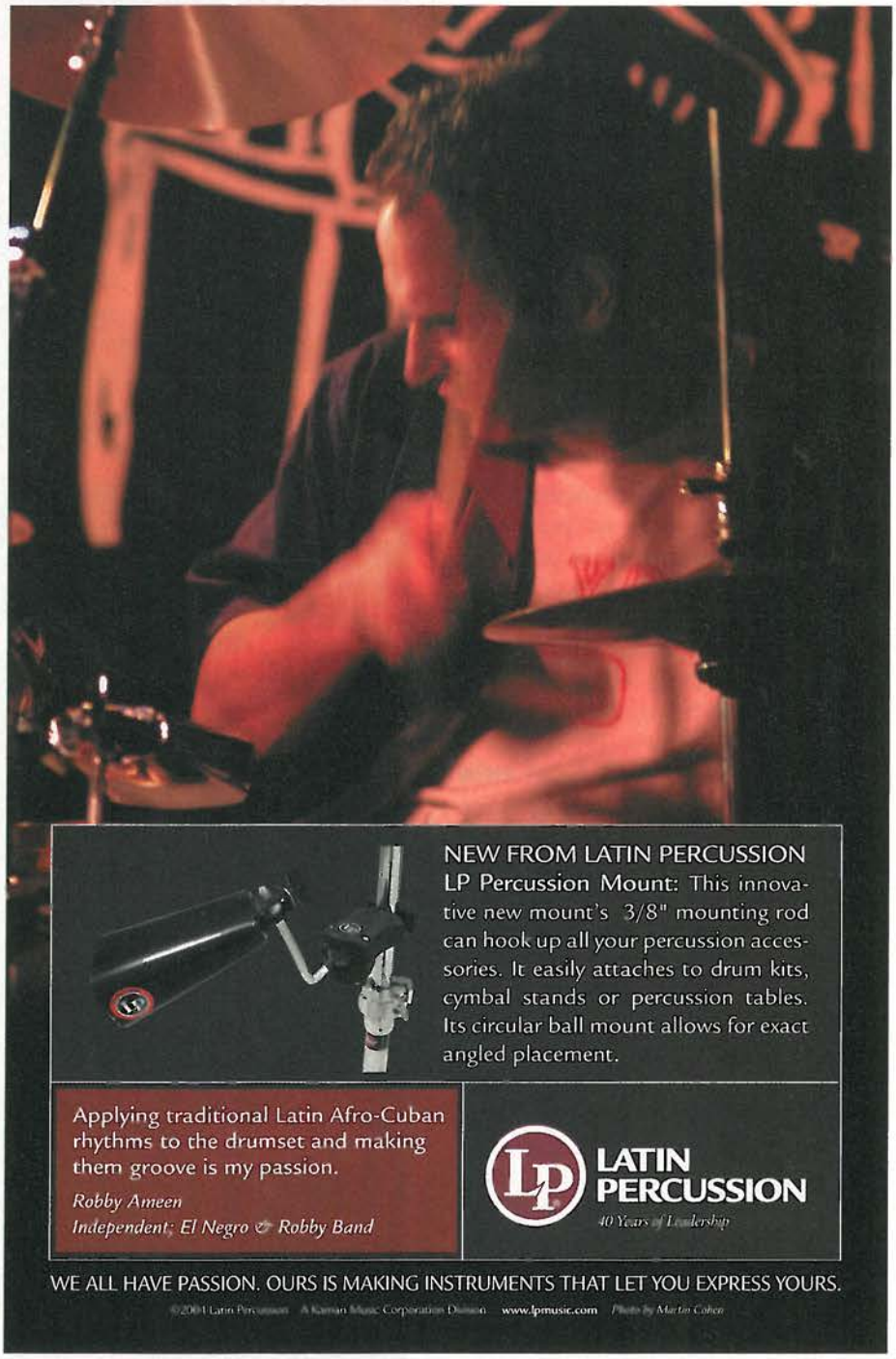
What About Today?

Many contemporary groups have attained massive mainstream success recently (read: multimillion-unit sales and heavy airplay) by utilizing what I call "fuzoid" elements in their music. Examples include The Dave Matthews Band (Carter Beauford would be the first to tell you he owes more than a passing nod to Billy Cobham), Tool (polyrhythms under Middle Eastern modes), and System Of A Down (Armenian rock—*yay.*)

Extreme drumming? Drum 'n' bass? They're all grandchildren of fusion drumming. Some people think musical ideas are just floating around out there in the ether, waiting to be snatched and put to use by the inspired artist. Well...maybe. But if you go back far enough, you can usually find something documented that was the basis for that "original" creation.

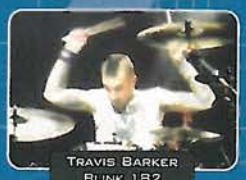
So if you have a chance, go back and listen to some of those old fusion records. You might learn something. You might be inspired. You might at least get a little appreciation for drumming history, as when some of my own students tell me, "Hey, my dad has a lot of the records you're on!"

Richie Morales' career has included work with such artists as The Brecker Brothers Band, Gato Barbieri, Spyro Gyra, Grover Washington Jr., Al Di Meola, and Mike Stern. He is also a member of the jazz faculty at Purchase College Conservatory of Music.

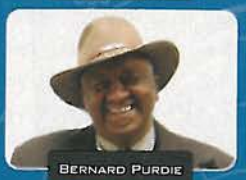


Jen Lowe
Jason Mraz

Santa Clara Vanguard
Drum Corps


Travis Barker
Blink 182

Jabo Starks
Clyde Stubblefield


Bernard Purdie

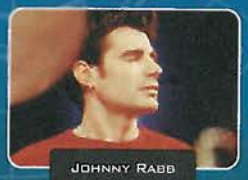
David Garibaldi
Tower of Power

Stanton Moore
Galactic

Mercedes Lander
Kittie

Torry Castellano
The Donnas

Zoro
Lenny Kravitz


Johnny Rabb

Marco Minneman
Independent

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HARDCORE

by Jon Wurster

The genre known as hardcore punk rock was a logical progression from the snarling assault of mid/late-1970s punk innovators like The Ramones, The Sex Pistols, The Damned, and The Clash. Hardcore was music made by and for disenfranchised kids who were coming of age in the early to mid-1980s, kids who could neither find value in the ideals their parents held dear nor relate to the arena rock of then-reigning bands like Journey, Foreigner, and REO Speedwagon.

By playing harder and faster than their punk forefathers, hardcore pioneers like Black Flag, Minor Threat, and Bad Brains upped the ante not just musically but lyrically. Set to tempos reaching warp speed, with the aggro level set at 10, these bands addressed everything from the hollowness of suburban living, the threat of impending nuclear war, and Reaganism to social inequality and the dangers of drug abuse.

The following recordings were chosen not only to showcase some of the best HC bands of the era, but to give a nod to some of the genre's most innovative—and ultimately influential—drummers. The majority of these records were made by musicians in their late teens and early twenties, on shoestring budgets, and originally released on tiny independent labels. What these records lack in sonic clarity is more than made up for by the sheer enthusiasm and passion exuded by their creators. Some two decades later, they still inspire a sense of exhilaration and give a nice snapshot of the beginnings of the DIY movement.

Anyone interested in tracing the roots of Travis Barker, Adrian Young, Josh Freese, Chad Smith, Dave Grohl, and many more of today's most successful drummers would do well to check out these essential recordings.

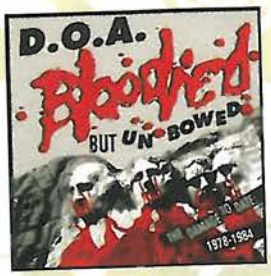
THE GERMS

(MIA) (SLASH/RHINO RECORDS)

DON BOLLES

Although this compilation of The Germs' entire recorded output features three different drummers, the key tracks here are from the Hollywood band's 1979 *(GI)* album featuring Don Bolles. While he may have lacked schooling as to the finer points of the craft, Bolles' pulsating and at times downright *spazzy* drumming meshes perfectly with the equally non-muso yet innovative playing of bassist Lorna Doom and guitarist Pat Smear (later of Foo Fighters), helping to create one of the seminal albums in the hardcore cannon.

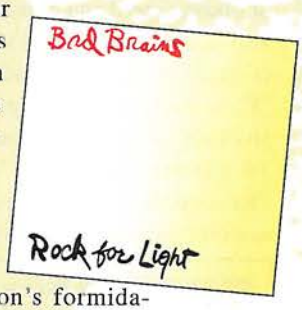
D.O.A.
BLOODIED BUT UNBOWED/ WAR ON 45 (SUDDEN IMPACT)
CHUCK BISCUITS, KEN "DIMWIT" MONTGOMERY



Some *MD* readers will no doubt recognize Biscuits' name from his more recent high-profile stints with Danzig and Social Distortion. But this is where the story of hardcore's most revered drummer begins. Biscuits' knack for walking that fine line between manic Keith Moon flash and the all-important ability to lay down a rock-solid foundation made him an inspiration for scores of aspiring young hardcore drummers. This rockin' CD combines tracks from the Canadian band's first two albums, early singles, and the 1984 EP *War On 45*, the latter seeing the departed Biscuits replaced, to surprisingly just as great effect, by his older, less-celebrated brother, Dimwit. Musta been in the genes!

BAD BRAINS
ROCK FOR LIGHT (CAROLINE)
EARL HUDSON

The second album (released in 1983) from arguably hardcore's most influential band. While producer Ric Ocasek's clean production tones down the raging intensity evidenced on the Brains' self-titled debut, it also serves to cast Earl Hudson's formidable drumming in a much clearer and more audible light. Hudson shows remarkable dexterity here, whether burning through thunderous blasts like "Joshua's Song" and "F.V.K." or chilling out on "I And I Survive," one of *Rock For Light*'s breezy reggae numbers.

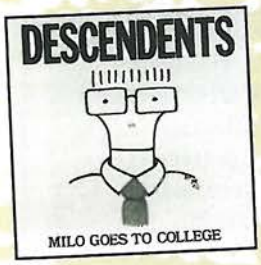


MINOR THREAT
COMPLETE DISCOGRAPHY (DISCHORD)
JEFF NELSON

Along with their DC compadres Bad Brains, Minor Threat are perhaps the most beloved of the early American hardcore bands. This career overview offers the opportunity to hear Jeff Nelson's drumming evolve from the blistering thrash of the band's first two 1981 EPs to the Motörhead-esque gallop of 1983's full-length, *Out Of Step*, to the artier, more experimental leanings of the band's final single, "Salad Days." For further inspiration, check out the quick glimpses of Nelson in the recently released *Minor Threat Live* DVD.

THE DESCENDENTS
MILO GOES TO COLLEGE (SST)
BILL STEVENSON

The line from today's punk/pop hitmakers like Blink-182 and Sum 41 can be traced directly back to this So-Cal group's classic 1982 debut album. The many strengths of bandleader/drummer Bill Stevenson, who also co-wrote many of The Descendents' best tunes, are on display here, as he pummels his deep, meaty-sounding drums with an impressive combination of power, melodic sensibility, and rock-solid timekeeping. These are raging, insanely catchy pop tunes driven by one of the era's great drummers. Best of all, they sound like they could have been recorded yesterday.



CIRCLE JERKS
GROUP SEX/WILD IN THE STREETS (FRONTIER)
LUCKY LEHRER

Along with Black Flag and The Dead Kennedys, L.A.'s Circle Jerks were one of hardcore's major marquee names. This CD, combining the group's first two albums (released in '80 and '82, respectively), finds The Jerks sticking mostly to speedy up-tempo punk fare—"slam rock," as the band called it. Lucky Lehrer takes no prisoners here and routinely displays impressive chops, most notably in the kick/snare/ride interplay of *Group Sex*'s "Back Against The Wall" and the lightening-fast fills of the same album's "Red Tape," one of hardcore's most intense drum workouts.

CORROSION OF CONFORMITY
ANIMOSITY (METAL BLADE)
REED MULLIN

Raleigh, North Carolina's Corrosion Of Conformity was one of the first bands to combine the adrenaline-fueled tempos of hardcore with the heaviness of Black Sabbath–inspired metal. 1985's *Animosity* finds C.O.C. (in a short-lived three-piece incarnation) both at the top of its game and at the forefront of the then-nascent punk/metal crossover movement. Mullin's bludgeoning yet nimble drumming propels the band through the kind of mind-boggling tempo shifts and seemingly random arrangements that would impact on such soon-to-be million sellers as Metallica and Soundgarden.

ALSO CHECK OUT
BLACK FLAG, DAMAGED (SST)
DIE KREUZEN, DIE KREUZEN (TOUCH & GO)
SSD, POWER (TAANGI)
MISFITS, WALK AMONG US (RUBY/SLASH)
DRI, DIRTY ROTTEN CD (ROTTEN)
RUIN, SONGS OF REVERIE AND RUIN (BLACK HOLE)
OFFENDERS, DIED IN CUSTODY (GRAND THEFT AUDIO)
FAITH/VOID, SPLIT CD (DISCHORD)

MDC
MDC (R RADICAL)
AL "SCHVITZ" SCHULTZ

One of the best-sounding recordings of the era, the 1982 debut album by this San Francisco-by-way-of-Austin band is a perfect example not only of hardcore's extreme political side ("Business On Parade," "Corporate Deathburger") but also of the lightening-fast, stop-on-a-dime style of drumming that became synonymous with the genre.

MINUTEMEN
DOUBLE NICKELS ON THE DIME (SST)
GEORGE HURLEY

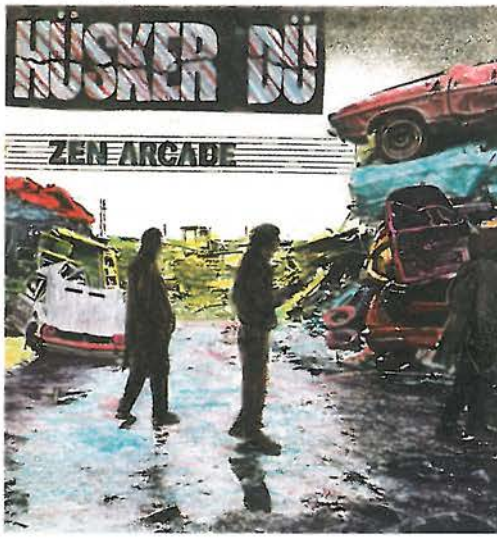
BIG BOYS
THE FAT ELVIS (TOUCH & GO)
FRED SCHULTZ, REY WASHAM

More than any other bands of the period, San Pedro, California's Minutemen and Austin's Big Boys lived up to hardcore's "no rules" philosophy, showing that you could still retain your punk roots while forging ahead in new directions. 1984's *Double Nickels*, a stunning grab-bag of punk, jazz, and funk, finds George Hurley effortlessly switching between these seemingly incongruent styles like he was born to do it. Fred Schultz and Rey Washam split drumming duties on *The Fat Elvis*, a 1993 re-packaging of the skateboard-loving Big Boys' final three records, leaving little doubt as to who were the reigning kings of raging yet danceable '80s punk-funk.

GOVERNMENT ISSUE
COMPLETE HISTORY VOL 1. (DR. STRANGE)
MARC ALBERSTADT

Although they lived in the shadows of their more famous neighbors, DC's Government Issue could serve up as strong a dose of hardcore as Minor Threat and Bad Brains, and this career retrospective proves it. By the same token, it reveals Marc Alberstadt to be one of hardcore's most underrated drummers: The band's performances are so tightly controlled that it takes a few listens to realize just how impressive his drum tracks are. The songs taken from 1982's *Boycott Stabb* EP show Alberstadt to be a master of quick-paced rolling snare and tom work, while his forceful wallop on 1984's *Joyride* demonstrates why GI was one of the few hardcore bands to convincingly tackle harder, straightforward rock.

HÜSKER DÜ
ZEN ARCADE (SST)
GRANT HART



Another example of a hardcore-rooted band stretching the limits of the genre. The Twin Cities–based Hüskers reached unexpected artistic heights with this 1984 punk/folk/psychedelia/pop–infused double album, now widely regarded as the pinnacle of '80s American independent rock. There's plenty of blazing speed and crunch here, but there's also an abundance of melody. Hart (co-writer of many of the songs, such as the beautiful "Pink Turns To Blue") plays accordingly: His light, almost jazzy touch (check out the 14-minute freakout closing track, "Reoccurring Dreams") keeps the sonic assault from caving in on itself.

Jon Wurster is the drummer in Superchunk. He's currently touring with Marah.

MD Radio — To hear some of the artists mentioned in *Essential Listening*, go to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.

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Les Claypool

The Original Bass 'N' Drummer

by Robin Tolleson

Doug Churchill

"I've been unbelievably fortunate," beams bassist extraordinaire Les Claypool. "I'm in a band with Stewart Copeland. I get to play with Tim Alexander, Jay Lane, and Brain. And I got to play with Neil Peart."

Besides leading his own bands—Primus, Sausage, Flying Frog Brigade, The Holy Mackerel, and most recently Colonel Claypool's Bucket Of Bernie Brains—Les has found time for side projects with Oysterhead, Adrian Belew, Gov't Mule, and others. These projects have afforded him the opportunity to jam with drummers like "Fish" Fisher, Jack Irons, Danny Carey, Mike Bordin, and Matt Abts.

Claypool plays pretty fair drumkit himself. "I love the drums," he says. "I started playing drums in the mid-1980s. My roommate had an old Gretsch kit and would play all the time. In fact I own those drums now, and they're still my favorite-sounding wood drums.

"I play the drums more than I do my bass. And when I go see a band, the first thing I look at is the drummer. I don't pay much attention to the bass player or anybody else unless it's something that really leaps out at me. It's always the drummer that strikes me first."

MD: You've played with excellent drummers in your many different bands. But one of those bands—Frog Brigade—seems to have had a revolving-door drum chair. What's the story there?

Les: It has been a bunch of different people. It started off with two drummers: Tim Alexander and Jack Irons, which was a pretty amazing combination. And then it was Jay Lane, who is one of the greatest drummers that I have ever come across. I don't think the world has seen what he can do. Then it was a fellow named Paul Spina, and then Dean Johnson, who is monstrous. He played on a couple tracks on *Live At The Purple Onion*. Next, "Fish" Fisher played with us, and that was incredible. Then came Paulo Baldi, a San Francisco guy who was playing with Deadweight when I first heard him. He took over in Frog Brigade last year. And Mike Dillon's been the percussionist/vibraphonist for a good portion of the band's life.

MD: What are some of the important traits that you look for in drummers?

Les: I look for someone who has great ears and an empathy towards what's going on with the rest of the band. My favorite players tend to be strong groove players. But there are very different styles of groove as well. Jay Lane has an on-top-of-the-beat 16th-note feel. Brain kind of leans the beat forward, but he's got this 8th-note feel to him, almost like Bonham meets Steve Jordan. Tim Alexander is usually at the dead center of the groove. He's got this almost tribal, very linear approach. Paulo Baldi has a bit of a Latin feel, but also a kind of Bonham/Steve Perkins thing.

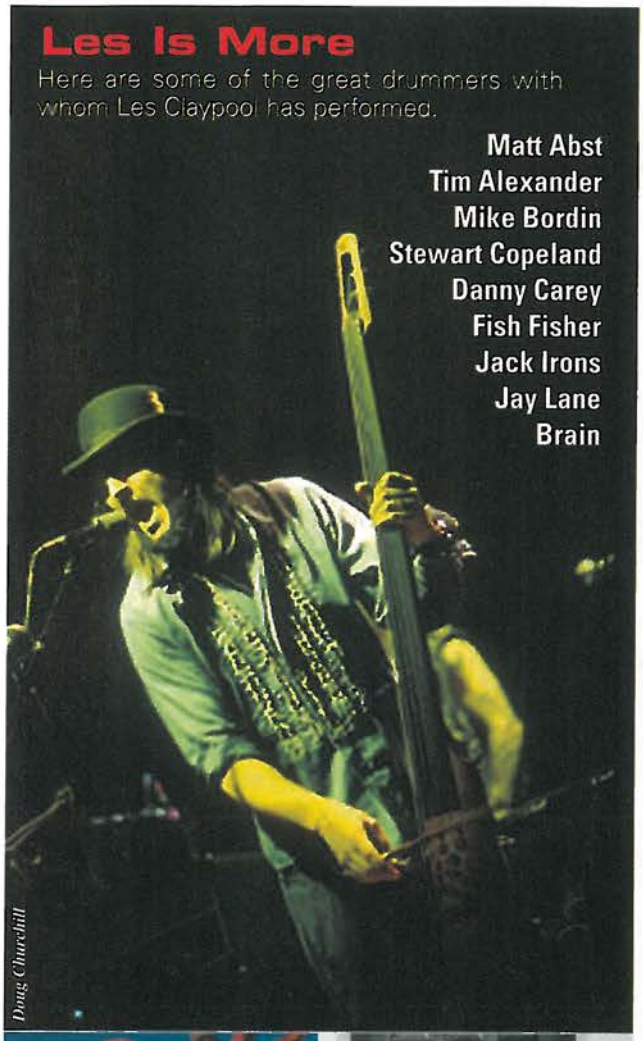
Stewart Copeland is his own entity. I've yet to play with anybody who plays remotely close to the way Stewart does, on any instrument. He has a unique approach to music, and it's been a difficult thing to even

"An individual's personality is absolutely reflected in his or her playing. It's a signature thing, like a thumbprint or the timbre of somebody's voice."

Les Is More

Here are some of the great drummers with whom Les Claypool has performed.

Matt Abst
Tim Alexander
Mike Bordin
Stewart Copeland
Danny Carey
Fish Fisher
Jack Irons
Jay Lane
Brain



Doug Churchill

Doug Churchill

Doug Churchill

try to figure out how he does it. I think a lot of that has to do with his upbringing. He grew up in the Middle East, and his first exposure to music was Eastern music. And he's this big, big guy.

Stewart is a listener, but the *way* he listens is unique. It's almost like he follows melody more than he follows anybody in the rhythm section. He follows vocal melody and guitar solos. I haven't had a relationship with a drummer like that before.

As a bass player, I was brought up reading comments by James Brown and Bootsy Collins that stated it was all about the "1"...hammer that "1"...no matter where you go it's all about emphasizing that "1." That's like a given now; it's nothing I thought should even be slightly challenged. But Stewart doesn't think that way. I really had to change my perspective, because in Oysterhead there was a lot of open improvisation. It's been a liberating thing to let go of the notion of hammering that "1." It's opened some new doors.

MD: Stewart is well known for his distinctive personality. How much do you think a drummer's personality contributes to that drummer's playing style?

Les: An individual's personality is absolutely reflected in his or her playing. It's a signature thing, like a thumbprint or the timbre of somebody's voice.

Playing an instrument is very much like a conversation. It's a give-and-take, and it has a certain flow to it. Some people aren't that great at having conversations, but are great at giving speeches. By that I mean that some players are more comfortable playing something that's well laid out and rehearsed, as opposed to having a free-form open conversation. Some players just hammer it out: There it is, take it or leave it. I've come across people that sort of stake out their territory, far more often than I've come across players who genuinely listen.

MD: How can a musician develop the ability to listen and improvise?

Les: The greatest thing you can do as a musician is play with as many different people as you can. It's like life, you're experiencing different perspectives. Take someone like [keyboardist] Bernie Worrell. He hears every little nuance, and he has this empathy as a player that's just incredible. He's a true master, and I think it comes from so many years on the instrument, and playing with so many different people.

Matt Abts from Gov't Mule is a hell of a drummer, and he listens real well. His approach to the drums is probably the closest to Bonham that I've ever come across, in the way he tunes his drums, the way he hits them, and some of his phrasing. He gets quite a bit out of the drums without just smashing them. He knows how to hit them and make them sing.

Another person like that is Jack Irons. Jack is an incredibly musical drummer. And he has a feel that I think is very distinctive. I'd like to hear more of Jack out there. I mean, I love Chad Smith's playing with The Chili Peppers, but *Uplift Mofo Party Plan* is one of my all-time favorite albums, and Jack's drumming on that is unbelievable.

Have you heard Jack's new CD? His music blows me away. It's all syncopated rhythms and different textures over the top, with steel drums and whatnot. It's very musical, and there's no pretense to it at all. It's Jack Irons being Jack Irons.

MD: I understand that you and Danny Carey have a project in the works.

Les: We got together to work on Adrian Belew's record. We started writing some stuff on our own, and we decided to do a project. But we haven't gotten together since.

I've always thought I had a pretty good handle on playing odd-time stuff, and Adrian Belew definitely challenged me. He can come up with some out shit, I'll tell you that. But Danny didn't miss a beat, he was right on that stuff. He's definitely got that very linear feel; his attack is precise and sharp. And he's a big guy, so he's pretty powerful. But with Danny, I didn't think so much of Bonham. I thought more of Bill Bruford.

MD: What about working with Brain? There doesn't seem to be much that he can't do on a kit.

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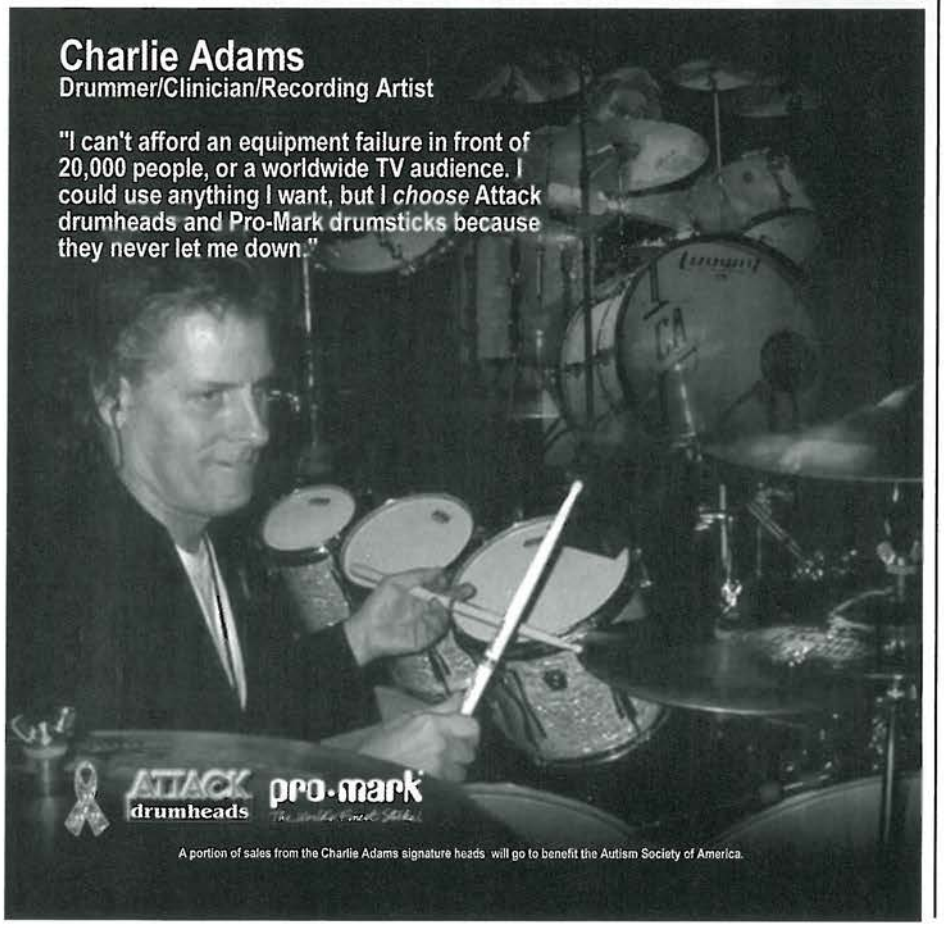

Les Claypool

Les: Brain is incredibly versatile, like a chameleon. He's like a mockingbird, too, in the sense that he can replicate almost anything. He used to be in a band called Ted Zeppelin. They did Ted Nugent and Led Zeppelin tunes, and Brain would play them *perfectly*. So he has the ability to do that. But when he steps out and is himself, it's a pretty interesting thing.

To be perfectly honest, having known Brain since the mid-'80s, I think the *Bucket Of Bernie Brains* record represents Brain's drumming personality the most out of anything I've heard him do. He's not trying to cop a certain style. It's him, off the cuff, being Brain.

MD: Did you ever play with Mike Bordin?

Les: Mike and Kirk Hammett and I did a little recording years ago, but we never did anything with it. Mike's one of these guys that I would love to record, because I don't think he's been recorded the way he sounds live. He has an unbelievable sound and presence when he plays acoustically. What Mike does with Ozzy is great, but when he's writing his own material and playing the way he feels, it's unbelievable. Those open flams he played on the early Faith No More records are so powerful.

MD: Considering all the great drummers you've heard and those you've played with yourself, who would you consider the greatest influences on your own drumming?

Les: For years I've just been ripping off Jay Lane, Stewart Copeland, and John Bonham. But lately I've been into [the late] Carlton Barrett of The Wailers. I got this Bob Marley & The Wailers DVD, recorded live in Santa Barbara in the '70s. It's one of their last recorded performances, and it blows my mind. The stuff that Barrett was doing was amazing. And it sounds to me like Stewart Copeland did some research on old Carlton too!

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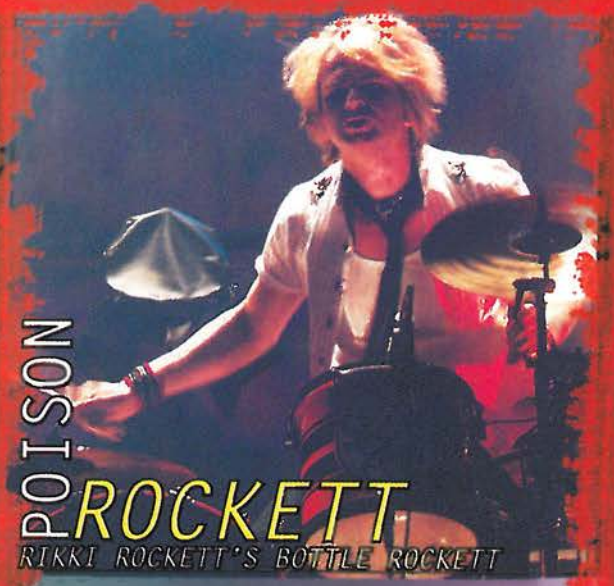

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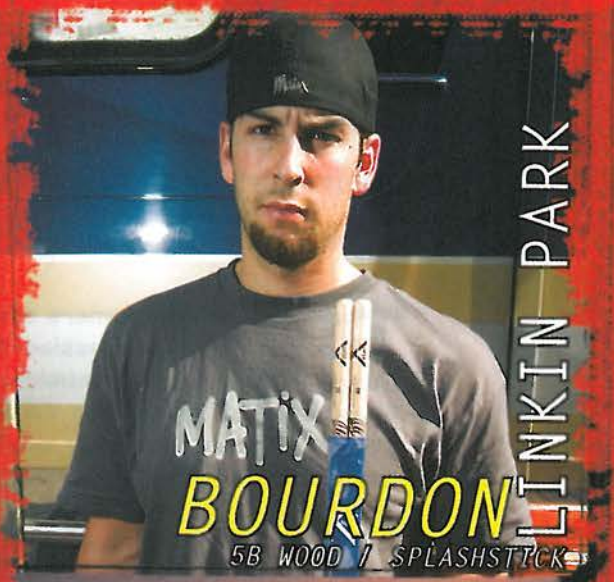

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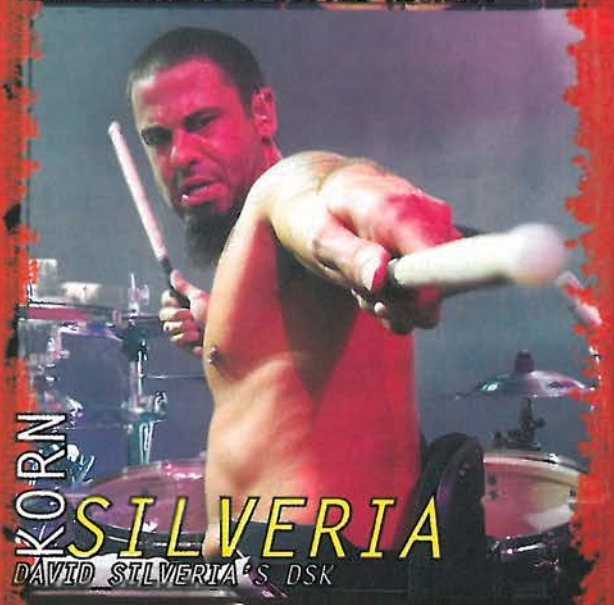

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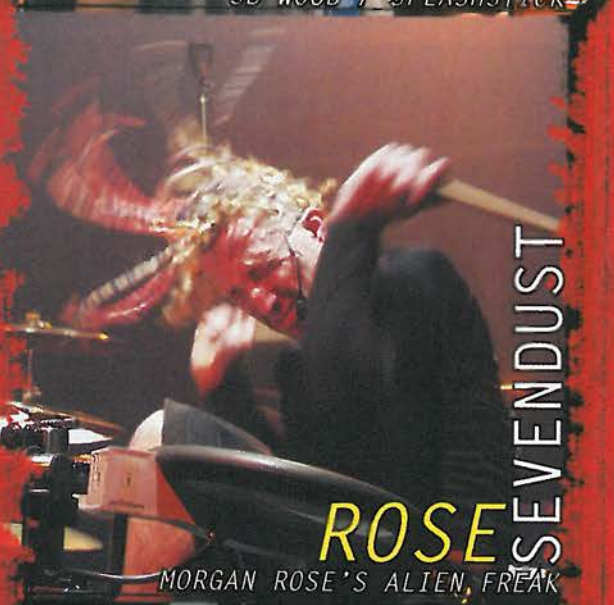
DAVID SILVERIA'S DSK



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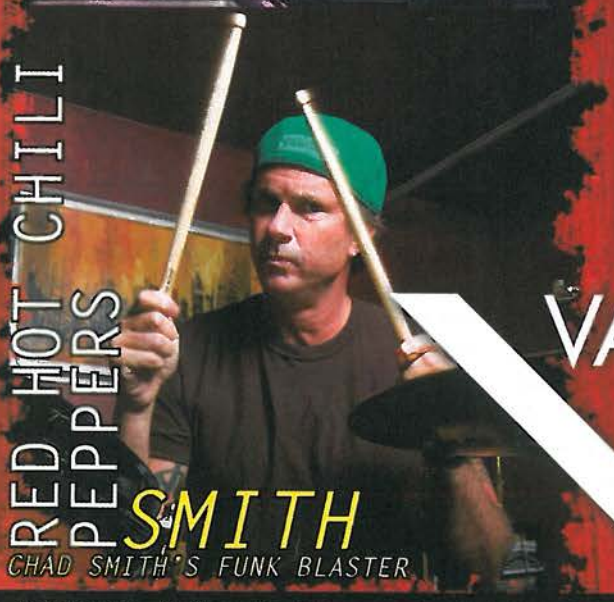

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Terry Bozzio
The Drummer As Orchestra

by Michael Bettine

There are few drummers who have pushed the boundaries of percussion further than Terry Bozzio. With modern music's great iconoclast, Frank Zappa, Terry was constantly challenged. In fact, Zappa famously wrote the much celebrated drum solo "The Black Page" specifically for Bozzio. The piece's difficulty was clear from its title: The density of the notes turned its chart black.

courtesy of Drum Workshop

After leaving Zappa, Bozzio replaced Bill Bruford in the progressive trio U.K., which featured Eddie Jobson on keyboards and violin and John Wetton on bass and vocals. In this group Bozzio developed a more linear drumming style. Soon after, he formed the highly innovative band Missing Persons, for which he not only drummed, but wrote much of the music and designed their stage sets. The band became a staple on MTV, and their debut album, *Spring Session M*, went gold.

Terry then went on to play in a succession of acclaimed trios, with guitarist Jeff Beck and keyboardist Tony Hymas, with guitarist David Torn and bassist Mick Karn, and with guitarist Steve Stevens and bassist Tony Levin. Along the way, the drummer put increasing amounts of energy into developing unique and intense solo performances, which are represented by a series of highly praised CDs and videos. Terry's unique slant has led him to become an orchestra unto himself, with a setup that includes chromatic tuned toms, multiple pitched bass drums, and an array of pitched cymbals.

Speaking from his home in Austin, Texas recently, Terry was very open about the musical challenges he has faced—and the growth he's experienced from meeting those challenges head on.

Frank Zappa
Zoot Allures (1976)

Zoot Allures was my first studio recording with Frank. Before that I had done *Bongo Fury*, which was live. By the time I got with him, Frank felt like nobody put the same sort of energy into a studio environment that they did when they were playing in front of people. So consequently, I believe half of that record was live stuff that we later overdubbed on.

For those tracks, my drums were set up on a riser in a giant room at Westlake. I remember Frank had already done some stuff with a Rhythm Ace, which he played for me. I had to acclimate myself to playing along to a sequence, which I hadn't done much. But Frank and the engineers were such pros and helped me get comfortable. Before I knew it I was playing to a click track for the first time, and it felt great. I played on about three or four tracks.

After that, I believe Frank went into the studio one time at Chateau Recorders out in Burbank. They set up my drums in a drum booth and started going through the motions, but before we got started, Frank just said, "This ain't gonna work. We're out of here." And that was the last time I did anything in the studio with him, except overdubbing percussion or vocals.

The thing is, Frank was always recording in one

form or another. The pressure was so great that it didn't matter if the red light was on, you always felt that you should do what you were expected to do at all times. In that respect, it was kind of cool.

The Brecker Brothers

Heavy Metal Be-Bop (1978)

There's another live one, man. The feeling I had was coming off of two serious years with Frank, being compressed like a spring, with all the discipline, chops, and everything else I'd learned from him. Then getting with those guys was like, "Let it go, and as far as you can shoot, we want to go farther." So it was wonderful.

I go back and listen to that stuff now and think, I had some balls stretching some of those fills and phrases *way* longer than they should have been. I remember them turning around and beckoning, like, Come on, we want *more*.

We went out on the road and had some amazing, magical evenings—and some that weren't so good. Then we got to the club My Father's Place: two nights, four shows, and it wasn't happening. We just couldn't get any of the inspiration or spontaneity that we'd had out on the road. We were looking at each other, like, "Oh God." During the last set I didn't feel much different, but afterwards Randy and Michael said, "Thanks, guys. You pulled it out at the last minute and saved the whole thing." Later they edited together some sections from different nights, though for the most part, it came out the way it came out.

In those days, I wasn't really thinking too much about how I sounded live. I used my Gretsch drums, the biggest sticks I could buy, and any used A Zildjians I could buy for fifty bucks at a drum shop, because they were going to break. I also used to use two 14" bottoms as my hi-hats, because I knew I would break anything else. And I had Evans hydraulic heads. On tour, sound was the last thing on my mind. So I left all my Ks and stuff I cared about at home.

U.K.

Danger Money (1978)

That was when the shit hit the fan. I went over to England, got pneumonia, and wasn't able to rehearse. By the time I got better, we were ready to record. So I wasn't really prepared.

We went into A.I.R. Studios, a real beautiful room in London, with Geoff Emerick, who was one of the Beatles' engineers. I had my Gretsch drums there and was fairly comfortable playing and getting sounds.

We also rented RotoToms and a bunch of big drums, Ludwigs and stuff. I didn't really have stands designed for the RotoToms yet, so they were out in the middle of nowhere, where I couldn't reach them very well. I just got through the best I could. But I did realize that because the RotoToms have one head without a resonating cavity, when you stick a mic' on them there's less overtones and interference. You get a better, more direct sound. That's when I switched to Rotos. I got black dot heads,

stuck a mic' on them, and they always sounded good.

So once again, that was kind of an uncomfortable situation. But when I detach from the emotional things—the personalities, how I felt at the time—and listen to it later, I'm proud of that and feel I did the best I could with what I had at the time. That was also the beginning of my starting to get into the linear, melodic, compositional aspect of drum parts—like on "Rendezvous 6:02"—instead of just playing a groove and doing some fills.

Missing Persons

EP (1980), Spring Session M (1982), Rhyme Or Reason (1984)

That was when I started to gain confidence that what I had was going to sound good and work. By then, I think I was playing Tama kicks and snares, RotoToms, and Paiste cymbals. So I had the double Chinas, my stacks, and little funny sounds.

At that time, [famed engineer] Ken Scott wanted to manage and produce us. He went around to all these record companies and tried to sell us based on our credits, but he just couldn't get anything going. Zappa had just built his studio, though, and offered it to us to record some demos while he was out on the road. He said, "You'll help me by getting all the bugs worked out. When I come back I can just start working, and you'll get a demo out of it."

So we went there. Frank had built this beautiful room that was half carpeted, with weird angles and stuff. Then the other part went out into this huge, two-story room with plaster walls and a parquet wood floor. I set up my drums at the edge of the carpet, facing into this big room. The sound was just gorgeous, with beautiful ambience and direct miking.

Ken was a master. Playing with a click was a drag, because you couldn't change the tempo. But Ken had a little box that was highly innovative at the time, a programmable click that allowed you to bump it up a few beats at the chorus, for instance, and then bring it back down at the verse. So I memorized and put down all the drums, listening to perfect time. This turned out to be our EP.

On *Spring Session M* there were some fast tunes with a straight-four bass drum. We ended up making a loop of the bass

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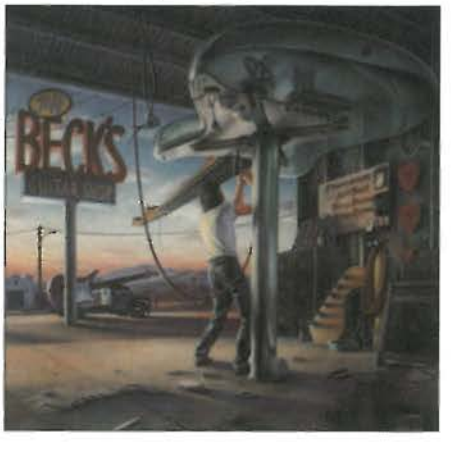
Terry Bozzio

drum so that it wouldn't drift, and we overdubbed on top of it.

The final insult was on the *Rhyme Or Reason* album. We switched to Simmons drums and I couldn't get it to groove. I couldn't lay it down like a machine. I knew the parts, though, so to save time, I programmed a Linn drum to play all the parts, and I left holes for me to play fills. We had a small budget, and to take more time would have cut into our advance. The electronics were not user-friendly, but I had the confidence to play it live and sell it. This period represented a lot of growth, it was a step.

Jeff Beck
Guitar Shop (1989)



I feel I hit my stride by then. Working with Jeff was so wonderful. It was very high-class. He flew me over to England and I lived there for a month. We were at Jimmy Page's studio working with Leif Masses, who had engineered for Led Zeppelin and ABBA. We were just going to get together, check it out, and jam. Leif threw up a mic' or two and recorded it on half-inch tape. It was so fat and unbelievable! The room was sweet. It was a fantastic drum sound, in your face. It was a big thrill for me, as the really great stuff is often buried under the mix. This was me being in the right place at the right time. I had free rein to get the sound. That's a great record.

The Lonely Bears
The Lonely Bears (1991)

Tony Hymas, from Beck's group, called me to do a record project in Paris. I thought it would be a lot of fun. He set up

some live gigs as an excuse to get me over there to record. There was no money, but I was able to build up my confidence. I had the option of trying different snares and ostinatos. We called our own shots. As a composer, Tony would try different concepts and suggestions. This was all a step up the ladder, moving towards more comfort in my playing.

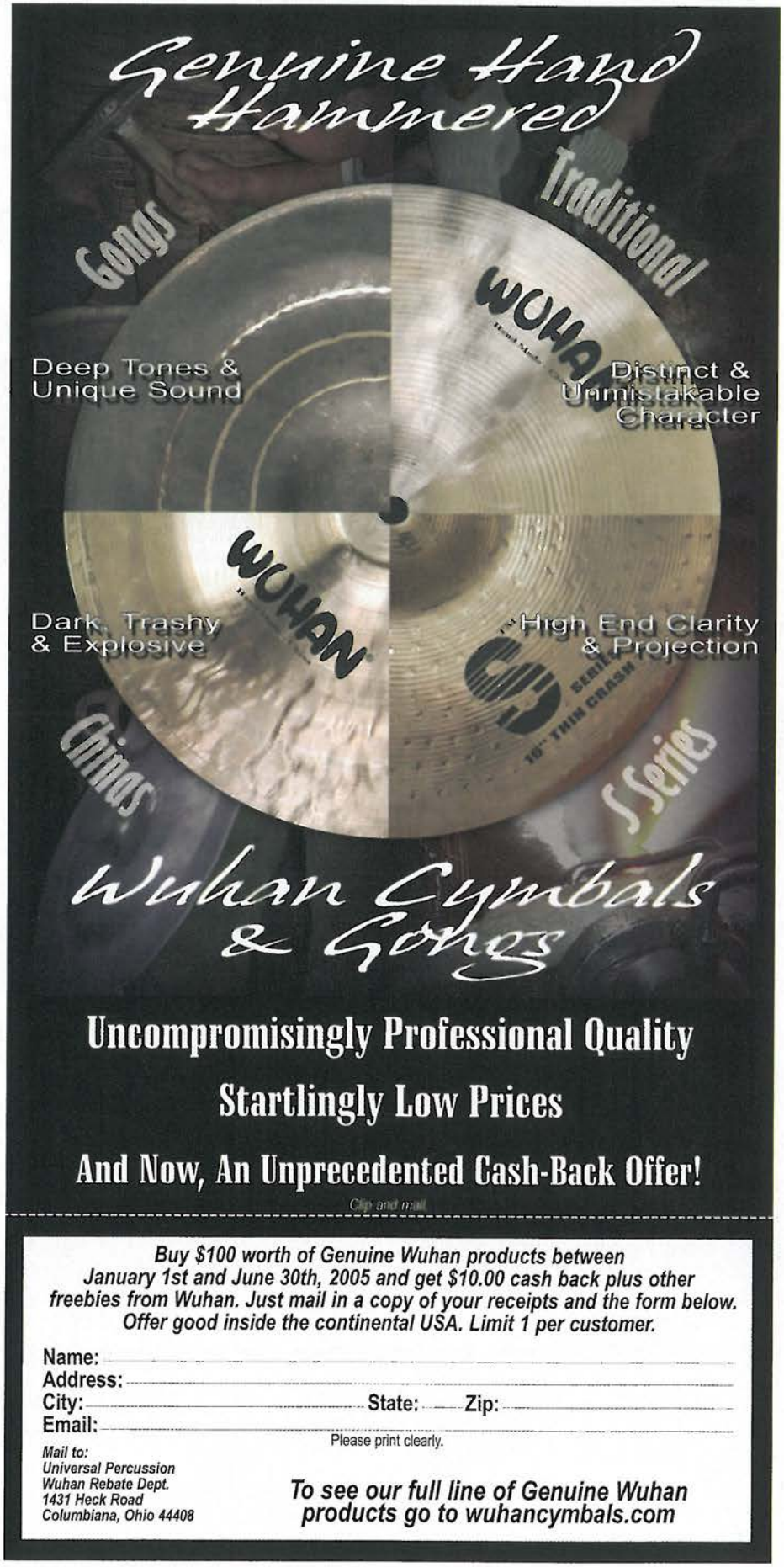
Polytown
Polytown (1994)

This is a great one. David Torn is very much into improvising, while Mick Karn is not. So David and I would put down our tracks and Mick would then work out his parts. Mick's an amazing guy, but he didn't feel comfortable. I thought he should just do it. He did let me suggest a lot of things, like for his bass clarinet. Torn would go back and find sections on the DAT to use. He would work for hours, building a loop one note at a time. It kept evolving. I brought all my percussion: gongs, bells, hand drums. I was coming off the Beck thing and playing very aggressively, with full-blown ostinatos. There was this Stravinsky-like feel, real nice things. We even did this sexy, slow thing with hand drums. This was a case of "Do what you do and learn."

Bozzio/Levin/Stevens
Black Light Syndrome (1997), Situation Dangerous (2000)

Steve wasn't comfy with improvising, so I had him come to Austin and jam. We would record things, then listen back and pick out three to five sections to make a tune out of. We'd then try to recapture that in the studio, again jamming and then overdubbing. This was a fun project. But we sometimes bumped heads, like with Tony Levin. He's a pro and an older guy, so he was like, "Don't mess with me."

On the second record, *Situation Dangerous*, I compromised what I would have liked to play. Steve writes amazingly beautiful stuff, but we were a bit polarized by then. The label, Magna Carta, had no money and no budget. So it was also recorded on analog tape at 15 IPS, so we wouldn't use a lot of tape. We got through



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it, though Steve didn't want to tour. Still, it's a great record that I'm proud of.

Bozzio/Mastelotto (2000)

This was the opposite of the studio. We were in my garage with all my gongs and percussion. We had Pro Tools and some great AKG mic's, and we just started going for it. It was like shaking hands and getting to know the guy. But I had too many hats, like producing, engineering, and worrying about things, and my playing was lost. So Pat got together again with his engineer, then sent me a CD, and I could hear where I was messing up. There was this one track that I couldn't get right, and then I realized he was in seven!

Pat worked on it and six months later sent a new copy to me, and it was smokin'! So it was like, "Let's put it out." It turned into a really nice record. At times it's like a "metal garden" with all the sounds. We have a DVD of our live concert that I want to put out.

Terry Bozzio & Billy Sheehan
Nine Short Films (2002)

Again, this was Magna Carta and no bread. Billy flew here and we started jamming. I had one idea and Billy had a font of unbelievable ideas. He was like an open faucet. I tried to edit his ideas and piece the stuff together. He had to split and I took an extra day to edit things. I sent it to him and he was gone to Japan for like six months.

The record company heard just drums and bass and said it didn't cut it. They suggested we add a guitar player. But Billy was so smokin' and creative. There's lots of cool ideas and patterns on it. I took it home and added the spoken word poetry and some keyboards. I kept thinking, "What would Tony Hymas do?"

That was my DW Tamo Ash kit on there. It was engineered in a beautiful room, but we ran out of time mixing. So I finished it up myself, and it ended up being more my vision.

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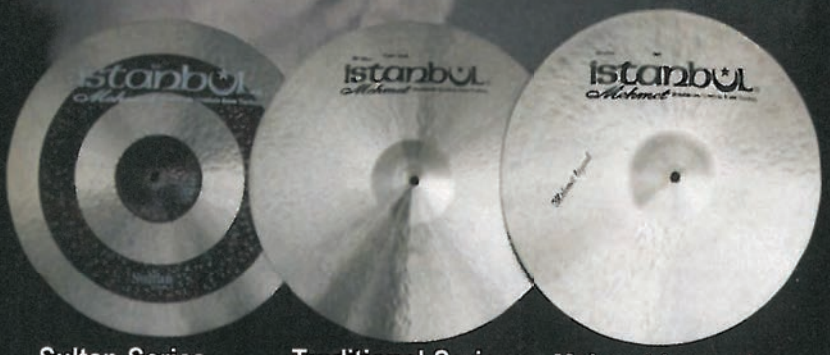

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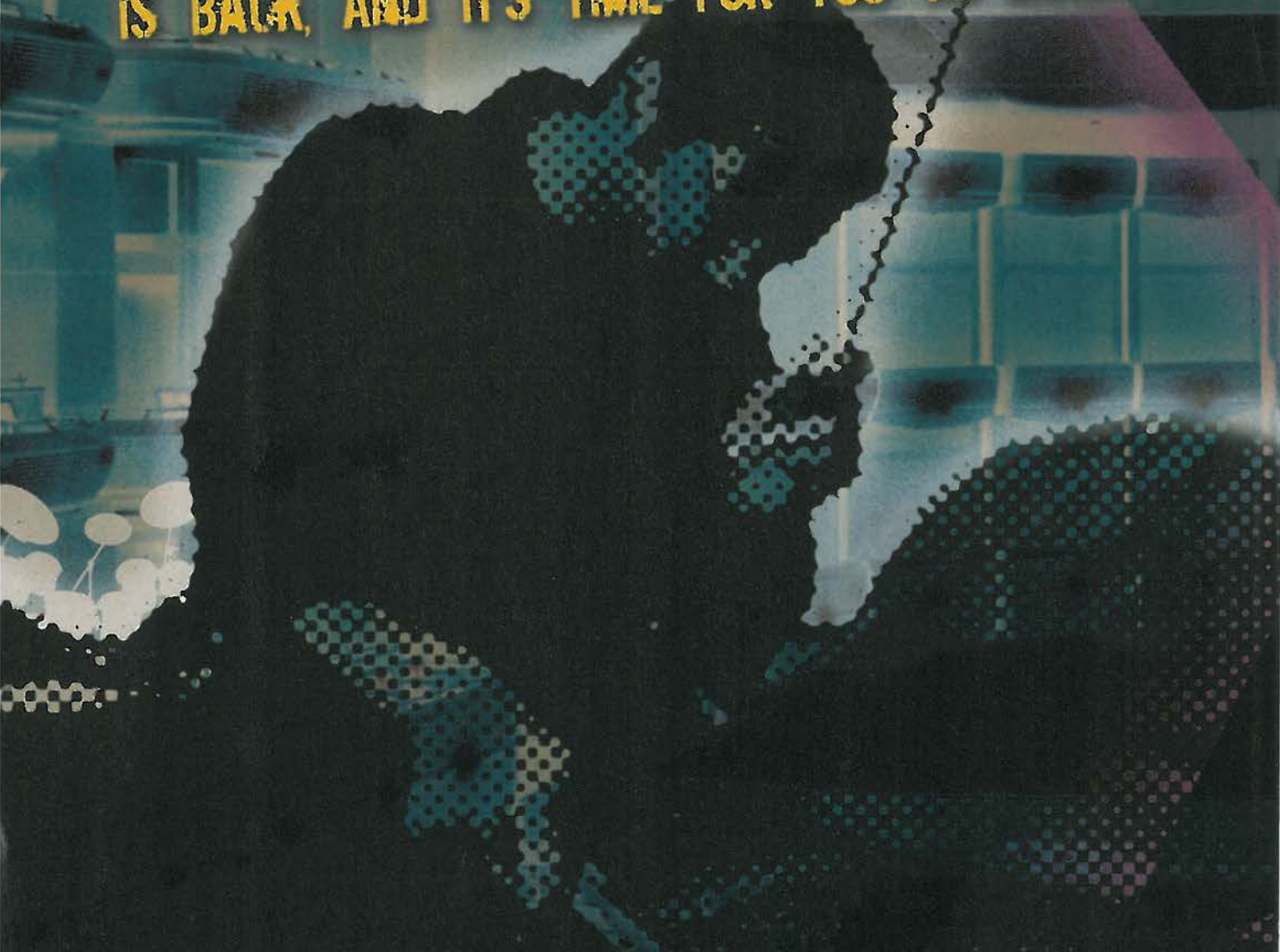

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Trans Am's

Sebastian Thomson

Mind And Body In Sync

Story by Ken Micallef
Photos by Damien Neva

Thirty years ago, you had drummers, drum machines, and primitive computers. The chances of the three joining forces were as likely as Spinal Tap collaborating with Kraftwerk. But with the advent of punk rock, Krautrock, hip-hop, post rock, electronica, and the Apple Mac, crossbreeding of not only drummers and drum machines but every form of music imaginable has become a career goal, a plan, and a probability—at least for a brave few. No one does it better than Washington, DC's Trans Am.

Trans Am is the ultimate stepchild of one too many reissues, two too many drum machines, and umpteen scratched copies of Van Halen's classic album *1984*. Trans Am is a party band and a thinking man's rock group. They have faced down the stereotype of three pencil-neck geeks who program ancient drum machines while jamming on BTO and King Crimson tunes. Sound confusing? Listening to any of Trans Am's nine albums won't clear up matters. Better to ask a Trans Am member—in this case, drummer/programmer Sebastian Thomson—just what the band is trying to do with their nervy rock 'n' electronic spew.

"Some people have accused us of exercising a sense of irony," Thomson says from the band's National Recording Studio. "But I don't think we do that. It's not about a sense of irony but about a sense of changing perspectives. Both Van Halen and Kraftwerk have influenced us, so we like to have a good time but we're also very serious about the music."

Trans Am's genre-splicing radicalism

extends to their live shows. As guitarist Philip Manley and bassist Nathan Means prowl the stage and grin, Thomson bashes one of the more minimalist drumkits in rock. The drummer augments his standard setup with four Remo RotoToms and two beat-up Chinas, each stacked with inverted crash and hi-hat cymbals. Favoring 16th-note flourishes on his hi-hats, Thomson plays with a muscular, military style that recalls Bill Bruford channeling Phil Rudd in tribute to the Motorik groove of Kraftwerk's classic "Autobahn." Or, imagine the late great Tony Thompson with Alex Van Halen and Roland 808s on his mind.

Thomson's vibe is the sound of raw power tempered by a love of drum machines and electro-pop. Strange stuff indeed, but the drummer's passion and endless energy are inspiring. And seeing a lefty ripping around a set of RotoToms is an unsettling experience. But Thomson is expert at destroying expectations and freaking out even the Trans Am faithful.

The thirty-two-year-old DC native also lends his kinetic energy to several other bands as both producer and skins-slayer. Thomson supplies groove power to the cross-continent project The Trans Champs, plays a one-man band role in The Frequency, and has produced indie rockers Ted Leo, Canyon, and Struction. And his latest project is Weird War, a more "traditional Funkadelic meets garage rock band." But Trans Am remains Thomson's gig of choice and his most demanding job, hands down.

Their latest release, *Liberation*, is a step back from the pure grind-core of their live shows, more intent on massaging political thought than winning over the dance floor. But still, the band rocks hard and goes for broke. Thomson plays acoustic drums on some tracks, programs drum machines and computers on others, and layers all three elsewhere.

A King Crimson-like slam informs the opening tune, "Outmoder." Tinny programmed beats fill "Uninvited Guest" and "White Rhino." A savagery not unlike early Stewart Copeland wallops "Idea Machine," while flagrant funk prods "June." And RotoTom accelerations sail through the album's closer, "Divine Invasion." Throughout, Sebastian Thomson plays like a beast of brawn with a mathematician's mind.

MD: Trans Am's shtick is a combination of sounds and styles: '70s muscle-car rock, synth-pop, Krautrock, and even a little Goth. Is this an intentional combination?

Sebastian: We don't sit down and say, "This is what we're going to do." We get bored easily and have short attention spans. It's hard to listen to an entire record all the way through. So it isn't an intentional thing. It just seemed like an interesting solution to that problem. Why follow the rule of an album maintaining one sound or direction? Why not have *different* sounds and styles?

MD: Is it harder to make a cohesive album with that approach?

Sebastian: Sure. And some people react very negatively to it. Our third album, *Surveillance*, featured strange math-rock on one half and electronic bleep music on the other. There wasn't anything in between. We did that intentionally. We found something in common there. Both styles of music are kind of minimal, repetitive, and simple. And neither has a pop song structure or a lot of harmony. It's more about rhythm and melody. But a lot of the reviews thought the album was too schizophrenic. It freaked them out.

MD: Your sound and personality is such a big part of the Trans Am sound. Are the songs ever built around your drumming?

Sebastian: It has evolved into this *thing*. The way Nate and Phil play, or the way they write parts, leaves me a lot of room. It was never like, "Play like this so Sebastian can play this." It just turned into that. Obviously, there are different kinds of songs on the records, but it's fortunate for me that the music is written in a way that gives me the opportunity to play stuff that other drummers wouldn't be allowed to do.

The music can be pretty repetitive and kind of minimal, so there's a lot of space. A lot of it is instrumental as well. If you have more of a pop structure with a front man, you can't really freak out too much on the drums.

MD: You play in a number of bands. How is playing with Trans Am different from Weird War, The Frequency, or Trans Champs?

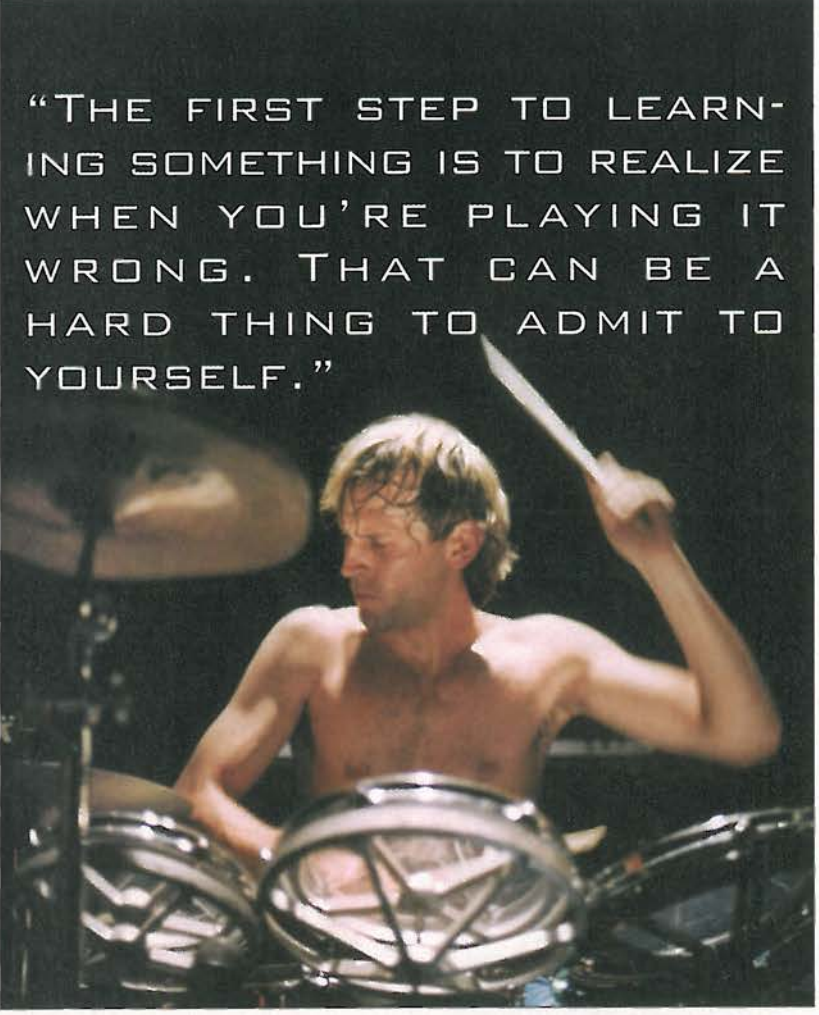
Sebastian: I'm mixing the new Weird War disc in the studio as we speak. Weird War is more traditional music with verses and choruses, so my playing is more subdued. It doesn't sound like Trans Am. It's more reserved and straightforward. I really enjoy that. It's a challenge. In Trans Am I do whatever I want. In Weird War, I do what the *other* guys want.

MD: Generally in Trans Am, your drums sound very big. Is that the recording or the tuning?

Sebastian: It's mainly the recording. We have our own studio in DC, National Recording Studio, where we recorded our last four albums. We like to get lots of different drum sounds. On the older albums we got more of a room sound. That's become popular now. *Liberation* has less of that than previous Trans Am records, but we almost always have a room mic' in the studio.

I do think that the way I tune has something to do with it, and the fact that I play lots of different kinds of drums. Sometimes I play just RotoToms—no standard toms. Sometimes I use triggers on the kick drum. And compression makes a difference, too. When you have your own studio, you can take the time to experiment. We have two big rooms so we can get two different room sounds happening simultaneously.

"THE FIRST STEP TO LEARNING SOMETHING IS TO REALIZE WHEN YOU'RE PLAYING IT WRONG. THAT CAN BE A HARD THING TO ADMIT TO YOURSELF."



MD: Is *Liberation* the first all Pro Tools album for Trans Am?

Sebastian: It's a combination, like on previous albums. Some songs were recorded to tape and then put onto Pro Tools to mix in the computer. Other songs were recorded directly into the computer.

MD: When you played conventional toms, did you use larger drums, as it sounds on the recordings?

Sebastian: On the first album, I played a Tama Rockstar kit, but they weren't big drums. I used to tune the drums to a medium tension. When I was a kid I used Remo Pinstripes, but then I moved to coated heads and used a little higher tuning. Then I got away from that and went back to Pinstripes with a looser tuning. Then a couple of years ago I scrapped toms altogether and started using four RotoToms.

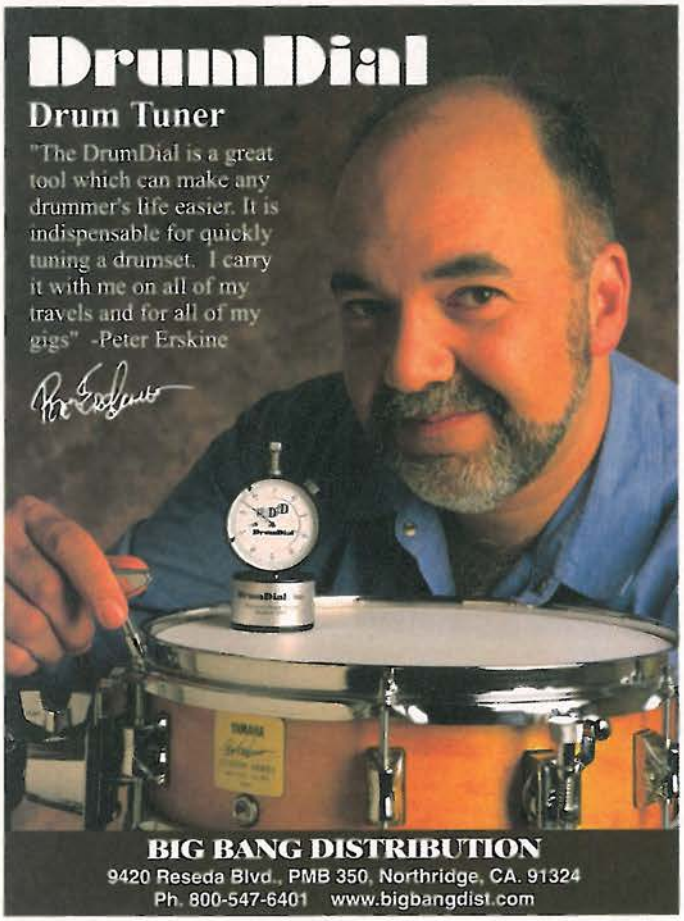
MD: Are they louder than conventional toms?

Sebastian: They're actually quieter. The heads resonate a lot but there's no shell to resonate. They sound great. I love them miked from the bottom. All the toms on *Liberation* are RotoToms.

MD: On "Remote Control" [from *Liberation*], the bass drum sounds like Alex Van Halen's. There's so much attack.

Sebastian: That's an instance where I didn't use any overhead mic's. It's all close miking with a little delay on it. If you have the time, you can get a lot of different sounds. Set up your close mic's, set up your overhead and room mic's, and all you have to do is mix those in different proportions and you'll have many different drum sounds.

MD: And your set is unusual. In addition to the four RotoToms, snare, and bass drum, your cymbals are two



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Chinas stacked with hi-hats and crashes. That freaky sonic approach seems to be your trademark.

Sebastian: I like fills where I do a single-stroke roll on the snare drum while interspersing alternating accents on the cymbals along with the kick. If you have cymbals with a lot of sustain, it will become a wash. That's why I like the really fast decay of stacked cymbals.

MD: Are any of your drum parts on *Liberation* looped or rearranged in Pro Tools?

Sebastian: There's not much of that. "Outmoder" is live, "Uninvited Guest" is a drum machine, "Idea Machine" is live, and "White Rhino" is drum machine. I don't think there are any loops. It's either drum machine, or me playing, or both, like "Outmoder," where I double the drum machine.

MD: Your drumming walks a fine line between acoustic and a more robotic, programmed sound. Do you ever try to sound like a machine?

Sebastian: That's definitely a big part of my approach. It's the whole man-machine thing. It's a nice combination when you have an acoustic instrument played by a robot. I do play with a lot of intensity and passion, but there's something to be said for repetition and precision. It can be very effective.

MD: How did you originally get into the man-machine approach?

Sebastian: In the early '90s, I was into The Jesus Lizard, Bad Brains, and Helmet. But I was also into electronic music. I loved Kraftwerk, even as a little kid. My bandmates and I were getting bored with electric guitars and wanted to incorporate more electronic music, but without making it sound industrial.

The idea of playing drums like a drum machine came about

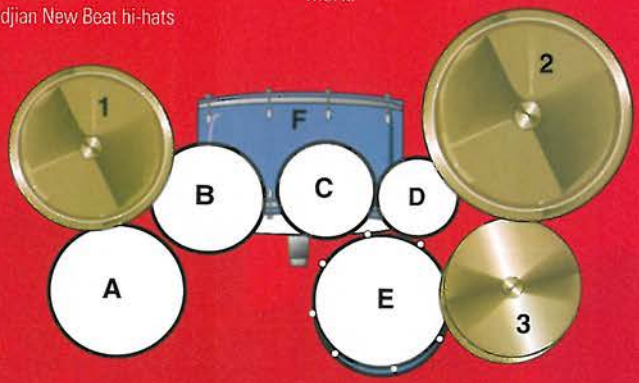
SEBASTIAN'S SET

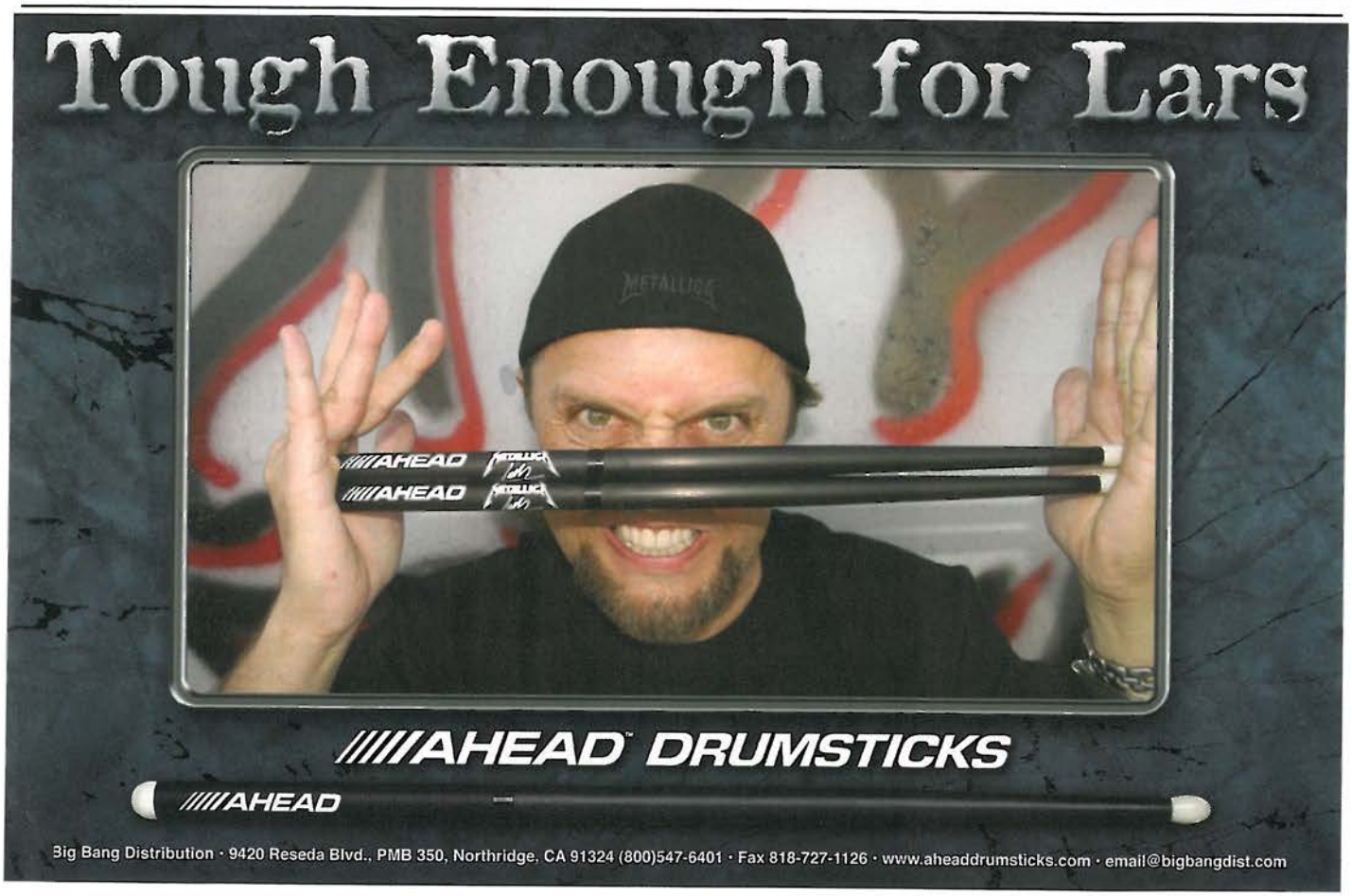
Drums: various
- **A.** 14" Remo RotoTom
- **B.** 12" Remo RotoTom
- **C.** 10" Remo RotoTom
- **D.** 8" Remo RotoTom
- **E.** 7x14 snare drum ('70s Ludwig Supraphonic)
- **F.** 14x22 bass drum ('70s Ludwig)

Cymbals: various
1. 14" Wuhan China (inverted) on top of 14" Paiste 2002 hi-hat cymbal
2. 18" Sabian China (inverted) on top of 18" Paiste 2002 thin crash
3. 14" Zildjian New Beat hi-hats

Sticks: Vic Firth 5B model (hickory with wood tip)

Electronics: According to Thomson, "I use drumKAT and Clavia ddrum triggers. For brains, I've used the Alesis D4, the Simmons SDS 8 and SDS 9, and the Drumfire DF-500. I used to put them through a Traynor Guitarmate guitar amp so when I hit the bass notes they would distort. And I've used Boss Dr. Rhythm DR-670, Roland TR-606 Drumatix, and E-Mu Drumulator drum machines. Now, instead of triggers, I use RotoToms and an Ampeg SVT bass amp behind me with a Dr. Rhythm 670 going through that. I press 'play' and play along with it."





because we would play along with preprogrammed patterns on a Casio keyboard. We covered Kraftwerk's "Man Machine," but instead of doing it with synths, we did it with bass, drums, and guitar. I played the drum machine pattern on my drums.

You have to get into that repetitive, super steady metronomic groove. I would practice playing very precisely with a metronome. And when I was younger, I played with records. Later on I played with drum machines.

MD: What would you play against a programmed 16th-note groove?

Sebastian: I'm a big fan of the backbeat, so I would begin with that, and then try doubling the drum machine pattern. When you go into a dance club and you hear the deejay play house or techno music, there's something about the beat being totally metronomic that puts people in a sort of trance. It can be annoying because it can be so repetitive, but if you play drums with a drum machine and get into that groove, I think you can bridge it.

MD: Are you triggering sounds in "Total Information Awareness"?

Sebastian: I trigger the kick and the snare using an old Simmons SDS 8. That's the one that Alex Van Halen used on the kick drum in "Panama" and songs like that. But I didn't use his settings.

MD: It sounds as if any Trans Am song could take any number of approaches. You use an Alesis brain, the Simmons SDS 8 and SDS 9, and a Boss Dr. Rhythm. How do you decide what to use for each song and whether it will be electronic or acoustic?

Sebastian: It's just a gut feeling, some experimentation, and a little trial and error. For "Total Information Awareness," we started recording and tried different tempos and grooves and played it over and over again, but it wasn't working. Out of boredom, we plugged in some triggers, and it sounded great.

MD: Do you work out all your parts and repeat them in performance?

Sebastian: I find that during the course of a tour, I slowly change the parts. I get bored playing the same thing every night. Still, I'm really of the school that every note and beat has its purpose, and if you change it too much you're punishing the audience because of your boredom. That's not fair to them.

MD: Do you play over drum machines in a live situation?

Sebastian: We do that constantly, maybe half the set. I use a big bass cabinet to monitor the machines. In "Outmoder," the drum machine plays the song's drum pattern. I then double it and do tom fills. It sounds really thick.

MD: You work very hard onstage and play hard. Is there a key to controlling and releasing power throughout the night?

Sebastian: Well, I can't drink beer during the set. I sweat a lot and get really thirsty, so I drink a lot of water. I also try to breathe deeply. And you have to stay in good shape. When we're on tour, I do a hundred pushups a day. And I am a vegan, so I don't eat meat, fish, or dairy. Thankfully, it's gotten a lot easier to be a vegan on the road.

MD: On "Big Machine," from the Trans Champs album, the music and your drumming recalls *Red*-era King Crimson.

Sebastian: I used to love Bill Bruford, and I loved that album. "Big Machine" definitely comes from that playing style. Remember "One More Red Nightmare"? I love all of that stuff Bruford does between the bass riffs in the middle of the song. And I also use a similar-sounding pang cymbal.

MD: You're involved in so many projects. How do you separate all of them in your mind?

Sebastian: Trans Am has been my identity for a long time. It's the most successful thing I do. Weird War is new and I'm in the band, but they tell me what they want. With The Frequency, I write everything.

MD: When did you meet Nathan and Phil of Trans Am?

Sebastian: We were finishing high school and they didn't like their drummer. The first song we played together was "Hey Joe." We've been playing together since 1990.

Common interest in music keeps us together. And we know when to take a break. Nathan lives in New Zealand and Phil lives in San Francisco. We have nine albums now, and since we're in our thirties, it's hard to maintain the same level of intensity in a project for so long. So instead of making an album a year, we make an album every two years. When we get together, we're stoked to play and write. We used to live in the same house together. We shared a studio and toured together. That was fun, but we're older now.

MD: You were born in Argentina and lived all over the world. That must have influenced your drumming.

Sebastian: My family lived in Argentina and then Curitiva, Brazil. My dad was an academic in urban planning. There was a military dictatorship in Argentina in the '70s, so we moved to Brazil, where the drumming and the music is insane. I grew up with my parents throwing parties and playing Brazilian batucada music. They would pass around claves, agogo bells, quicas, shakers, maracas, and guiros to all the partygoers. When I returned to Brazil to tour with Trans Am, I would hear the Brazilians speak and it brought me back to my childhood. We also lived in Paris and Holland before coming to the US.

MD: Did you study drum technique, rudiments and such?

Sebastian: In Argentina, I was in a band that played American and English hits. They recruited me to sing, but the drummer never showed up, so I played drums. At that point I began taking lessons for about a year, and after high school I took four months of jazz lessons.

MD: Were you a good student?

Sebastian: I was into it. My first instrument was violin back when I was in elementary school, and I hated it. I didn't listen to classical music. But when you're in a band and fifteen years old, you want to practice. What could be more fun than that? So I definitely

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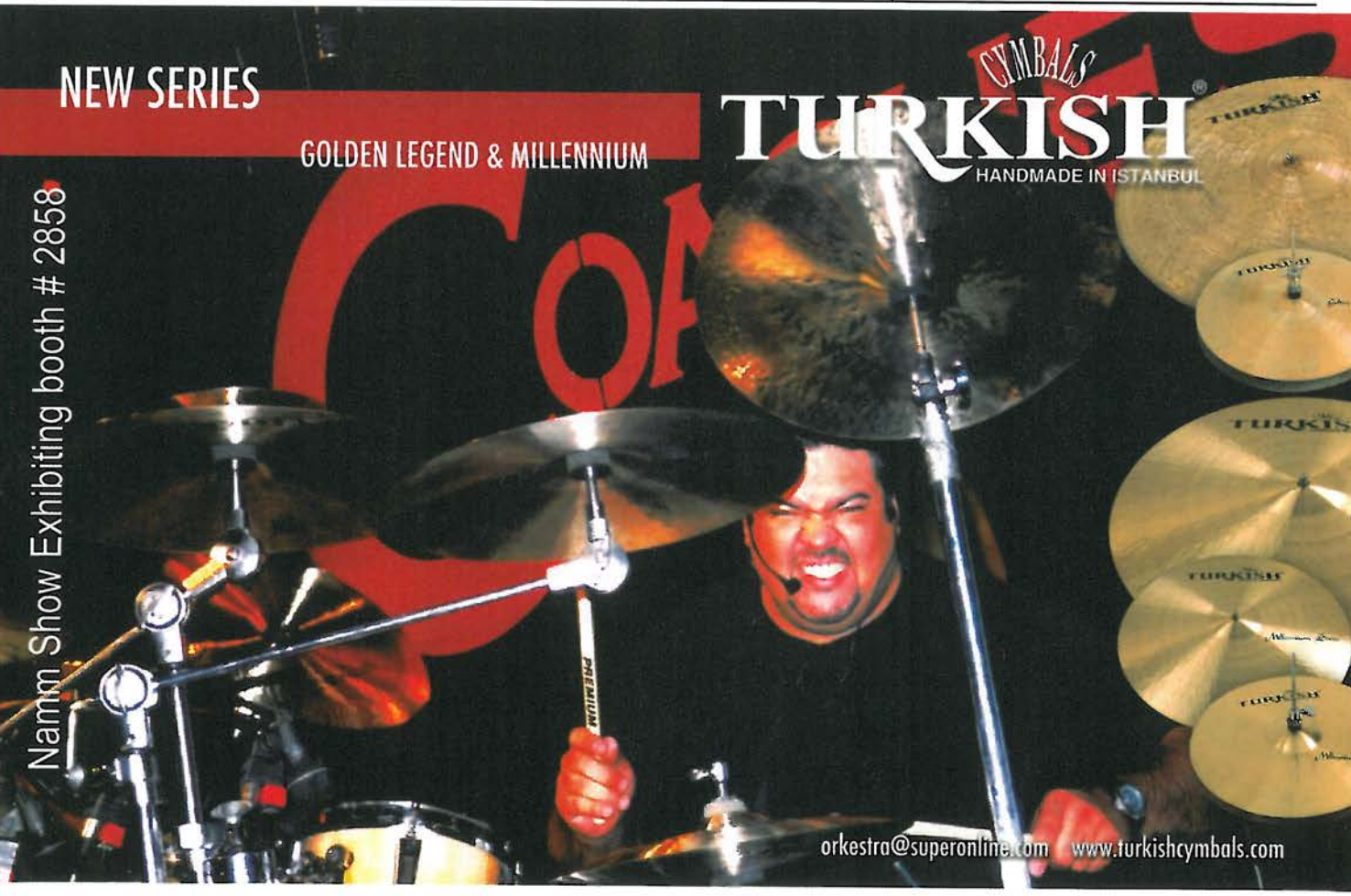

practiced a lot.

MD: And I understand you also like Scottish fife & drum music?

Sebastian: I like that it's kind of swung. It has all those triplets going on. If you listen to "Allnite," on the *Frequency* album, there's actually a Scottish snare drum sample in the groove. Scottish snare drumming is the only European military drumming that is actually funky.

MD: Are you influenced by Japanese Taiko drumming?

Sebastian: Yes. I think it's similar to my approach, very repetitive and super physical and hypnotic. I saw the Kodo drummers live, and it was one of the best shows I've ever seen. It makes your hair stand on end to see ten dudes hitting these huge drums as hard as they can. I love mass drums, be it Brazilian, Scottish, or Taiko. It's all a bunch of guys playing together.

MD: What do you practice now?

Sebastian: I concentrate on alternating 16th-note combinations. You can do a lot more with them than people realize. You can do it all over the drumkit. The advantage of playing those rather than a paradiddle is that alternating 16ths can sound a lot more even and fluid. Take the accent patterns from *Stick Control*, and instead of playing them on the snare, play the accents with the kick drum and cymbals. I think there's a 16th-note ghost pattern in our brains that makes certain music sound hypnotic.

Trans Tracks

Recordings

Artist	Album
Trans Am	Futureworld
Trans Am	Redline
Trans Am	Liberation
The Frequency	The Frequency
Ted Leo	The Tyranny Of Distance
Trans Champs	Double Exposure
Weird War	(coming in '05)

Favorites

Artist	Album	Drummer
James Brown	all	all
Led Zeppelin	all	John Bonham
The Police	Zenyatta Mondatta	Stewart Copeland
Kraftwerk	The Man-Machine	Ralf Hütter
Van Halen	1984	Alex Van Halen
Fugazi	Repeater	Brendan Canty
DAF	Gold Und Leibe	Roert Görl
Herbie Hancock	Thrust	Mike Clark
Bad Brains	I Against I	Earl Hudson
Black Sabbath	Vol. 4	Bill Ward
PiL	The Flowers Of Romance	Martin Atkins
Sly & The Family Stone	Greatest Hits	Gregg Errico

MD: What advice can you give to drummers who want to explore different styles of music and equally different approaches to drumming?

Sebastian: The main thing is to listen carefully and be honest with yourself. A lot of times you might play a beat and think it sounds really solid. But if you record it, you might find that you're all over the place and not steady at all. You have to really listen to yourself carefully and objectively.

The first step to learning something is to realize when you're playing it wrong. That can be a hard thing to admit to yourself. Practice the things you're bad at. Don't assume you can do something until you listen to yourself honestly.

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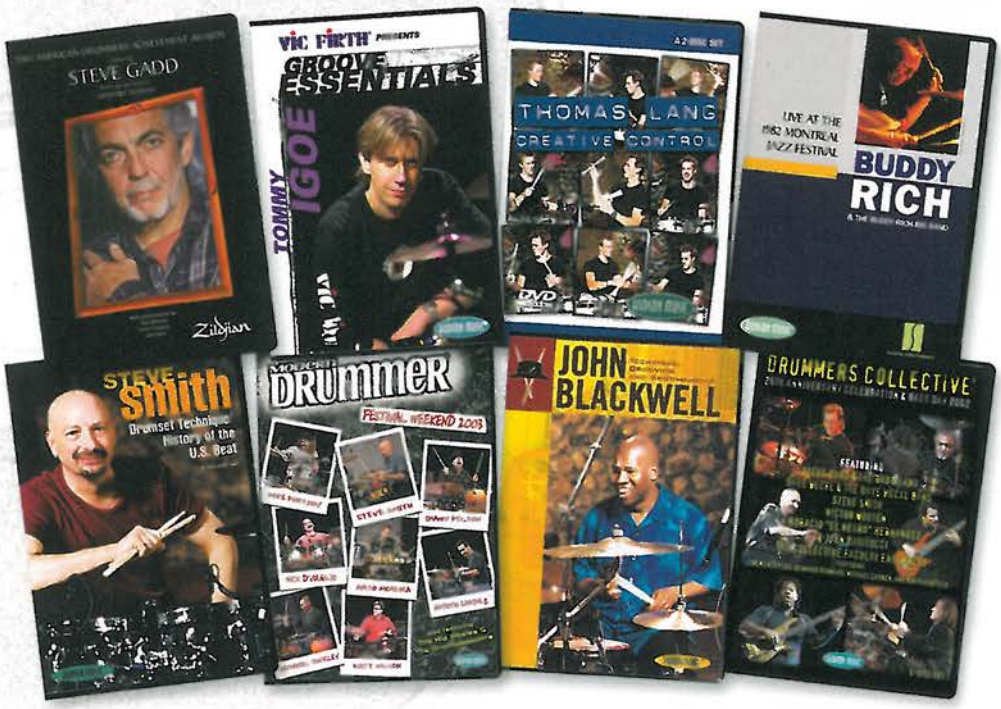

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Hudson Music DVDs and books are available at your local music retailer. To find a dealer near you, or for more information, please log on to www.hudsonmusic.com, email hudsoninfo@aol.com or call 1-888-796-2992. In Europe email hudsoneuro@aol.com. Dealer inquiries: Hal Leonard Corp. (414) 774-3630

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‡Additional delivery charges apply due to size and weight.

Acoustic Or Electronic?

Yamaha Steve Gadd Signature Snares And DTXPLORER Electronic Kit

Yamaha has introduced three new Steve Gadd signature snare drums as part of a complete overhaul of their signature series snare drum line. The Steel ($1,259), Birch ($999), and Maple ($1,039) Steve Gadd snare drums feature 35° bearing edges for Steve's hallmark "fat" sound, plus a 3.5-mm snare bed, said to reduce sympathetic vibration from the snares and the rest of the kit. All models also feature black vintage wood hoops, with the bottom hoop cut in a decagonal (ten-sided) shape in order to accommodate any snare stand.

The DTXPLORER electronic kit is designed to bring Yamaha's electronic drum technology within reach of the beginner, traditional musician, hobbyist, and educator. The five-piece kit includes high-impact rubber pads with natural feel and rebound, mounted on a folding ribbed rack. The kit also features an FP-6110 bass drum pedal and coded cabling snake for quick and easy setup. The drum trigger module is equipped with a 16-bit/32-note polyphony tone generator that produces realistic, physically modeled voices, plus a selection of digital onboard effects. Users can also create and store up to nine custom kits. The module also includes Yamaha's Groove Check practice feature, a multifunction metronome, easy-view backlit LCD display, and simple "plug and play" connections. Retail price is $1,059.

(714) 522-9011, www.yamahadrums.com.

How Hard Do You Hit?

Zildjian A Custom Medium Crashes And New Z Custom Models

Zildjian has added new seven new cymbals to their A Custom series and three to their Z Custom series, providing choices to drummers who need cymbals with a range of projection capabilities.

New A Custom medium crashes are the heaviest of all A Custom crashes. They're said to have a cutting attack with a high-pitched sound for use in nearly any volume situation, yet to "shimmer with the brilliance and musicality that has come to define this range of cymbals." They feature a brilliant finish and are priced from $225 (14") to $367 (20").

The new Z Custom 19" Thrash ride, 14" splash, and 20" Projection crash are designed to be loud, raw, and aggressive. The Thrash ride ($320) allows the drummer to switch between shoulder riding and crash patterns to fill out the most intense of musical settings. The Projection crash ($339) features a unique profile and the largest bell of any Zildjian crash cymbal, and holds the distinction of being the loudest cymbal that the company has created. Available in a thin weight, the 14" splash ($208) features a loud, low-pitched voice with a long decay.

(781) 871-2200, www.zildjian.com.

High-Tech And Historic

Page Rope-Tension Drums

Page Drums combine maple shells and contemporary hardware with a time-tested rope-tension tuning system that has been modernized for state-of-the-art performance. The rope-tension system eliminates the need for lugs of any kind on the shells, making the shells totally free-floating and extremely resonant. In addition, each drum can be hand-tuned by adjusting a single attached key, maintaining equal tuning at all times. Bass drum spurs are attached to the hoop, rather than the shell. Kits are sized and finished entirely to the buyer's specifications, making each kit unique.

(619) 299-3266, www.pagedrums.com.

A Dry Spell

Meinl Byzance Dry Cymbals

Meinl has introduced select Byzance models that feature a new dry finish. The matte finish is achieved by sandblasting the surface of the cymbals, which is said to result in an extremely dry and earthy sound with a very short sustain and great stick definition. The cymbals are particularly recommended for studio and other miking situations, because the dry finish acts like a "natural gate," preventing overring. Current models include 14" hi-hats ($452) and a 20" ride ($415).

(615) 227-5090, www.meinlpercussion.com.

Selling The Sizzle

Wuhan Riveted China Cymbals

According to Wuhan, when you start with "a great-sounding large China cymbal" and add a few rivets, you get "a great-sounding sizzle ride with plenty of stick definition and minimal build." In addition, China crash cymbals with rivets are said to have more bark than their original trashy counterparts. Retail prices range from $124 for a 12" China to $299 for a 24" China. (Sizes increase in 2" increments.) A 27" model is also available at $359.

(330) 482-5750, www.wuhancymbals.com.

They Got The Beat

PowerFX On-Line Sound Library

Drummers Bil Bryant and Frank Sanderson have created what they say is the largest on-line sound library for downloadable loops and samples on the Internet, at www.powerfx.com. Drum and percussion loops include beats played by Jabo Starks (James Brown), Jerome "Bigfoot" Brailey (Parliament/Funkadelic), Ralph Peterson (Branford Marsalis), Henry Gibson (Curtis Mayfield), and Pistol Allen, Jack Ashford, and Uriel Jones (all of Motown).

The PowerFX Sound Library is a resource for project and home studio producers. The beats also make great study tools for aspiring drummers. PowerFX has also recorded string sections in Russia, techno producers from Germany, House from the UK, and loops libraries from Bill Laswell. Anyone having interesting beats is encouraged to send them to PowerFX.

(011) 46-8-660 99 10, bil@PowerFX.com.

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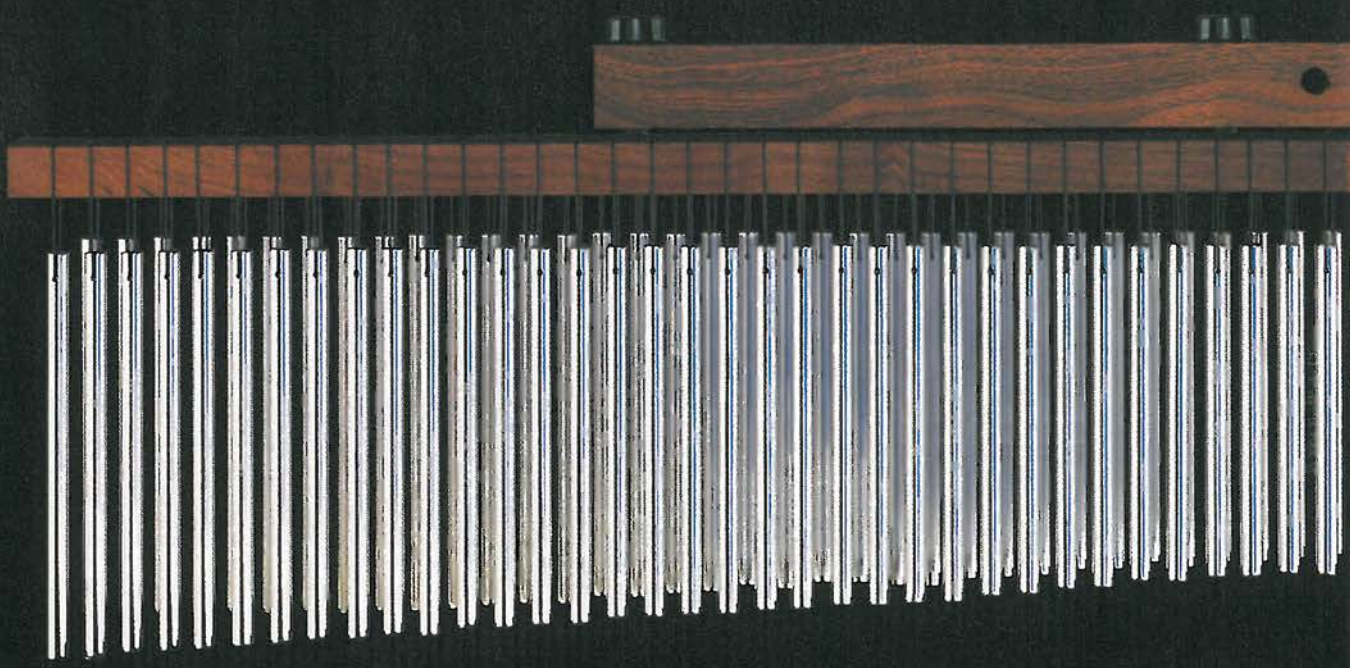

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Adding A New Element

Drum Solo Copper-Shell Snare Drums

In addition to block-construction wood snares and other unique models, Drum Solo offers a line of metal-shell snares. Previously, that line has included brass and aluminum drums. Copper-shelled models have now been added. All copper snare drums are made of $^1/_6$"-thick material, and are offered in several finishes including raw (unfinished) metal.

(415) 898-2647, www.drumsolo.cc.

The Reference Shelf

Eighth Note Rock For The Beginning Drumset Student

by Glenn Ceglia **(Upstate Drum Publications)**

This book is designed to teach basic beats commonly used in rock music, with an eye to preparing students for other, more advanced rock books. The author developed the sequence of beats by observing his students learn and determining what made a beat easy or difficult to master. List price is $12.95.

(315) 866-4867, upstatedrums@aol.com.

So You Wanna Be A Rock & Roll Star

by Jacob Slichter **(Broadway Books)**

This book is described as "a hilarious inside look at the real business of popular music by the drummer of Semisonic." A tell-all personal experience tale by the author, the book's sub-title pretty much sets the tone: "How I machine-gunned a roomful of record executives and other true tales from a drummer's life." List price is $21.95. **www.broadwaybooks.com.**

Turn It Up & Lay It Down, Volume III: Rock-It Science

by Spencer Strand **(Drumfun, Inc.)**

This long-awaited third volume in the highly successful play-along CD series takes a new direction. Where previous volumes featured bass tracks in a variety of styles, Volume III features bass and guitar together, creating a full band sound when the drummer is added. In addition, the tracks all lean toward contemporary rock styles. Several are reminiscent of specific groups, as indicated by tongue-in-cheek titles like "Prime Us," "Food Fighter," and "Tool Shed." A total of seventeen tracks are included. List price is $19.95. **www.drumfun.com.**

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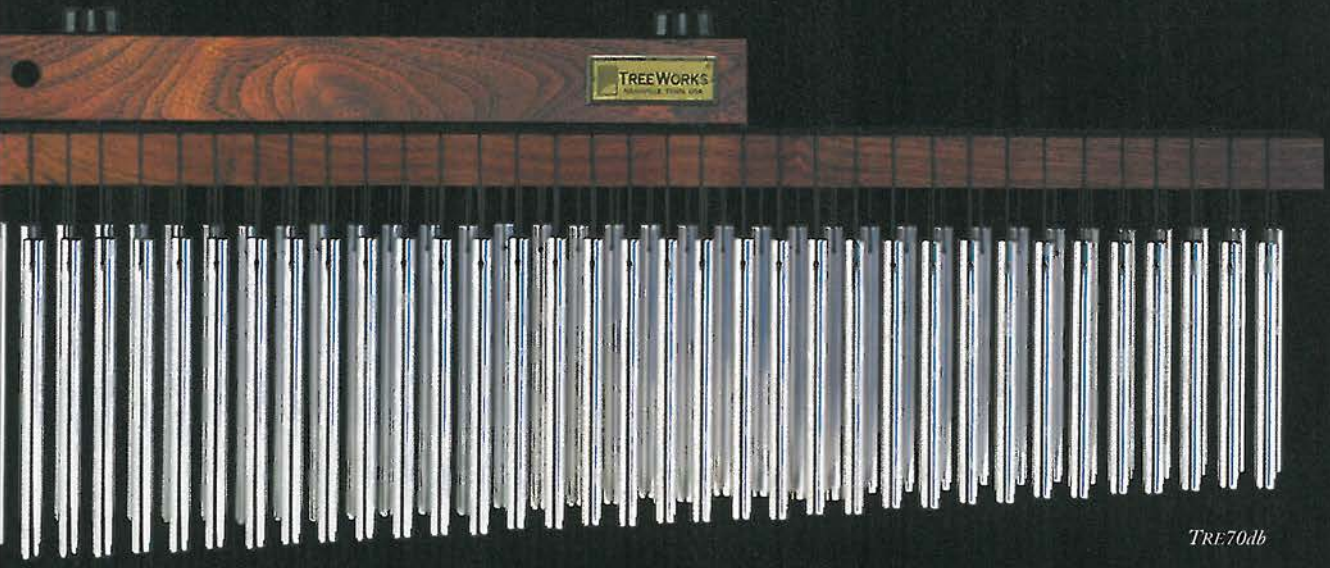

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This is what some companies use to make chimes. To us, it's just a plastic tie—meant for temporarily attaching price tags to clothing. Not something we would use to make a serious musical instrument. We feel keeping all the bars attached is important to the sound of the instrument. That's why our chimes are hand-tied, one-bar-at-a-time. Once each knot is set, it's sealed and locked with permanent resin. Now it would take 50-pounds to break our braided cord. If that seems like overkill—just remember, this is all we do. All day, everyday. Listen. It matters.

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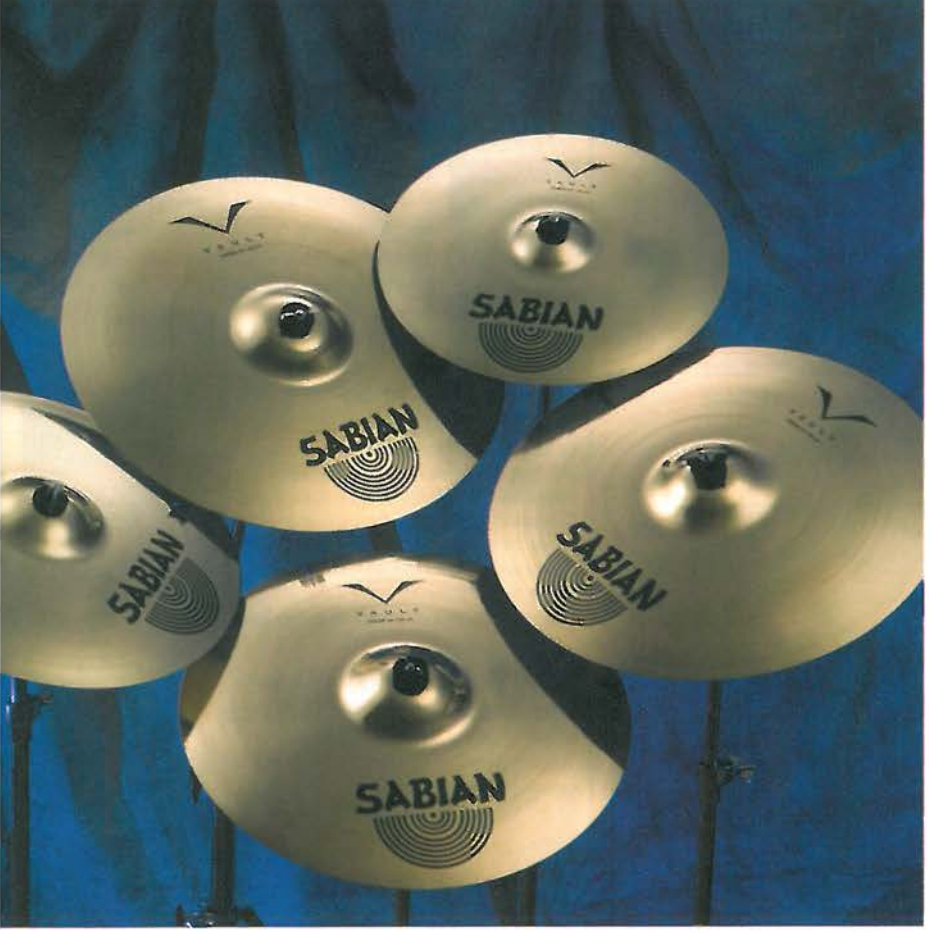


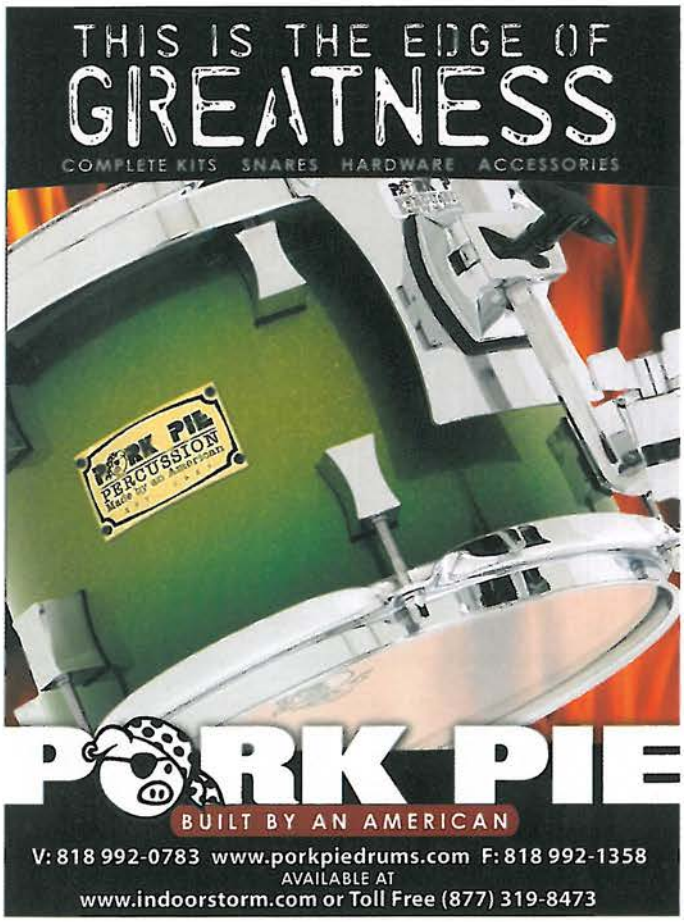
Real Research Results

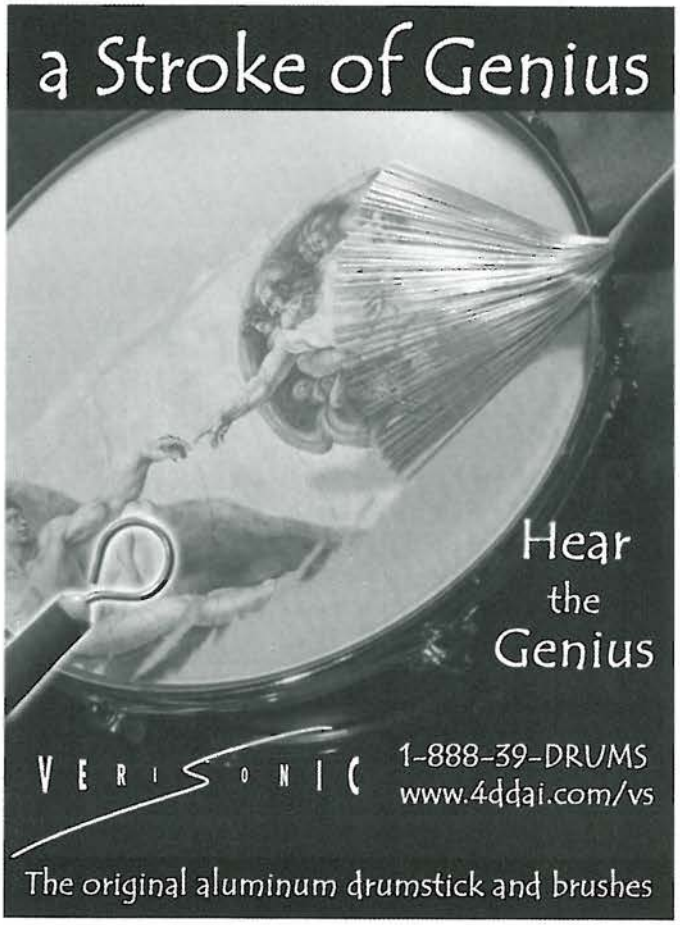
Sabian Vault Crashes

Sabian's new Vault range has been created to provide a variety of special cymbals and sounds that otherwise defy description—many in response to artist and consumer request. The first model to be introduced is the Vault crash, which Sabian describes as "a thin but robust crash designed to deliver high-speed response with bright, shimmering sounds and a full sustain that enhances its impact and presence. Its sensitivity lets it deliver clean, glassy crashes at low volumes, while the speed and robustness of its response will blow through the loudest volumes in any style." The manufacturer further claims to have boosted the cymbal's performance with a power-increasing bell, balanced bell-to-bow response ratios, and narrow pin-lathing that reinforces the focus of the cymbal's sound.

The Vault crash was refined through two years of R&D, including reaction to it during Sabian's recent Vault tour, which let thousands of people hear unmarked prototypes. Vault crashes are available exclusively in brilliant finish, and are protected by Sabian's one-year quality protection warranty. Prices range from $269 (16") to $370 (20").

(506) 272-2019, www.sabian.com.





And What's More

The **CANNON** Drummer Rug measures 5'x5', allowing room for virtually any setup. Each rug comes with a built-in barrier to eliminate bass drum "creep." The material of the rug itself is durable and spike-resistant, yet thin enough that drummers can roll their stands inside the rug for transport. Rugs are available with a rubber backing. List price is $84 with the backing, and $69 without.
(330) 482-5750, www.universalpercussion.com.

ROLAND is now offering product manuals online. From Quick Start Guides, to Owners Manuals and Applications references, it's all available at **www.RolandUS.com.**

The **NINO** Racket Tambourine features a sturdy rattan frame along with a single row of nine aluminum jingle pairs. An ergonomically shaped handle is said to make the racket ideal for a child's hands. The Racket Tambourine meets all child safety standards for ages three and up. List price is $26.90.
(615) 227-5090, www.meinlpercussion.com.

Short mp3 soundclips of **MEINL** cymbals have now been added to the related product pages of **www.meinlcymbals.com**. Almost every Meinl cymbal can now be heard online by clicking on the cymbal's item number. The mp3 files are compatible with any common media tool and can also be downloaded.

RHYTHM TRADERS has launched their new Latin music Web site, www.latinrhythmtraders.com. The site is devoted to Latin music, with drumming resources including photo galleries, a message board, information about workshops and trips abroad, as well as hard-to-find CDs, DVDs, and musical instruments.

Latin Rhythm Traders follows on the heels of the company's successful African drumming site, African Rhythm Traders. As they started to carry more Cuban and Brazilian instruments and media, the new Latin Web site was designed to reflect their dedication and growing expertise in that area.
(503) 288 6950, www.latinrhythmtraders.com.

GRETSCHGEAR.COM has added new items to their growing apparel and merchandise line. A vintage Round Badge logo T-shirt is now available to join the matching Round Badge hat. The BroadKaster Specialty Shirt is available in 100% cotton pigment-dyed "Blue Granite," and the new Deluxe Drum Logo T features the classic Gretsch logo (small on the front left and large on the back). Other available items include limited-edition collectibles, accessories, and original historic Gretsch catalogs, posters, and stickers.
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Let Your Voice Be Heard!

Vote For Your Favorites In Modern Drummer's 27th Annual Readers Poll

The MD Readers Poll lets you express *your* opinions about the drummers, percussionists, authors, and educators whose efforts have been particularly outstanding in the past year.

All it takes is a stroke of your pen (or a click of your mouse) to show support for your personal faves.

So get out there and vote!

Instructions

1. You may use the official *MD* ballot from the magazine, or a photocopy. You may also vote by email. (See below.)
2. All ballots must include your name, address, and signature.
3. Please print or type your selection in the corresponding box.
4. Make only one selection in each category. Leave blank any category for which you do not have a firm opinion.
5. Place the ballot in an envelope, affix appropriate postage, and mail to *Modern Drummer*'s offices at 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009.
5. Ballots must be postmarked no later than **March 15, 2005.** Results will be announced in the July 2005 issue of *MD*.
6. PRIZE DRAWING: Providing your name, address, and signature automatically makes you eligible for *MD*'s voter-appreciation drawing. Three ballots will be drawn at random; each winner will receive a free one-year subscription to *Modern Drummer*.

To Cast Your Vote Online

1. Go to: www.moderndrummer.com.
2. Click on the ballot button located on the home page.
3. Fill in your selections in the appropriate fields on the ballot.
4. You must complete the fields for your name and mailing address. Anonymous email entries will be disqualified.
5. After you have entered your selections, press the "Submit" button.

(Note: Your browser must accept cookies in order for your vote to count.)

Category Descriptions

Hall Of Fame

Vote for the artist, living or dead, who you feel has made a historic contribution to the art of drumming. Current members of the Hall of Fame are not eligible for this category. They are: **Gene Krupa**, **Buddy Rich**, **John Bonham**, **Keith Moon**, **Neil Peart**, **Steve Gadd**, **Louie Bellson**, **Tony Williams**, **Billy Cobham**, **Joe Morello**, **Carl Palmer**, **Bill Bruford**, **Art Blakey**, **Max Roach**, **Jeff Porcaro**, **Larrie Londin**, **Elvin Jones**, **Vinnie Colaiuta**, **Terry Bozzio**, **Ringo Starr**, **Roy Haynes**, **Dave Weckl**, **Dennis Chambers**, **Steve Smith**, **Simon Phillips**, and **Mike Portnoy**.

All-Around
Not intended to indicate the "overall best" drummer, but to recognize drummers noted for performing in a variety of musical styles and applications.

Studio
Drummers who record with many different artists and/or on jingles, TV, and film scores.

Mainstream Jazz
Drummers performing in small acoustic jazz groups, in styles such as bop, avant-garde, etc.

Contemporary Jazz
Drummers performing fusion, jazz-rock, new age, etc.

Big Band
Drummers performing regularly in traditional big bands, stage bands, etc.

Up & Coming
The most promising drummer brought to the public's attention within the past twelve months.

Pop
Drummers performing in pop and dance-oriented styles.

Rock
Drummers performing mainstream, modern, and "college" rock music.

Metal
Drummers performing in all metal styles, including speed, thrash, death, etc.

Punk
Drummers performing in punk or primarily punk-influenced styles.

Prog
Drummers performing in progressive rock styles.

Hip-Hop
Drummers performing hip-hop, rap, dance, and other contemporary urban music styles.

R&B
Drummers performing funk, blues, and Gospel styles.

Country
Includes studio and touring drummers who perform in the country and country/pop fields.

Hand Percussionist
Hand and specialty percussionists (as opposed to drumset players). Includes TV and touring percussionists, as well as performers of Latin, Afro-Cuban, Brazilian, and other world percussion.

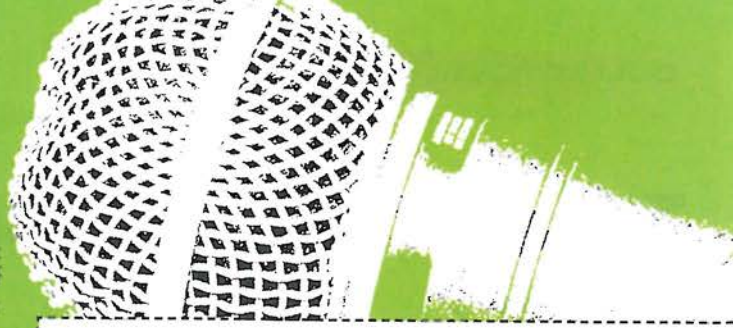
Classical/Mallet Percussionist
Includes mallet percussionists (of all styles), timpanists, and symphonic percussionists.

Clinician
Name the drummer or percussionist you found most inspiring and educational in a live clinic presentation.

Educational Book
Your favorite educational drum book released within the past twelve months. Please name the book and author.

Educational Video/DVD
Your favorite educational video or DVD released within the past twelve months. Please name the video/DVD and artist.

Recorded Performance
Your favorite recording released within the past twelve months. Please name the band or artist, the drummer, and the album (or individual song, if applicable).



Modern Drummer's 27th Annual Readers Poll Official Ballot

Hall Of Fame _____
All-Around _____
Studio _____
Mainstream Jazz _____
Contemporary Jazz _____
Big Band _____
Up & Coming _____
Pop _____
Rock _____
Metal _____
Punk _____
Prog _____
Hip-Hop _____
R&B _____
Country _____
Hand Percussionist _____
Classical/Mallet Percussionist _____
Clinician _____
Educational Book _____
Educational Video/DVD _____
Recorded Performance _____

Name: _____
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Email: _____
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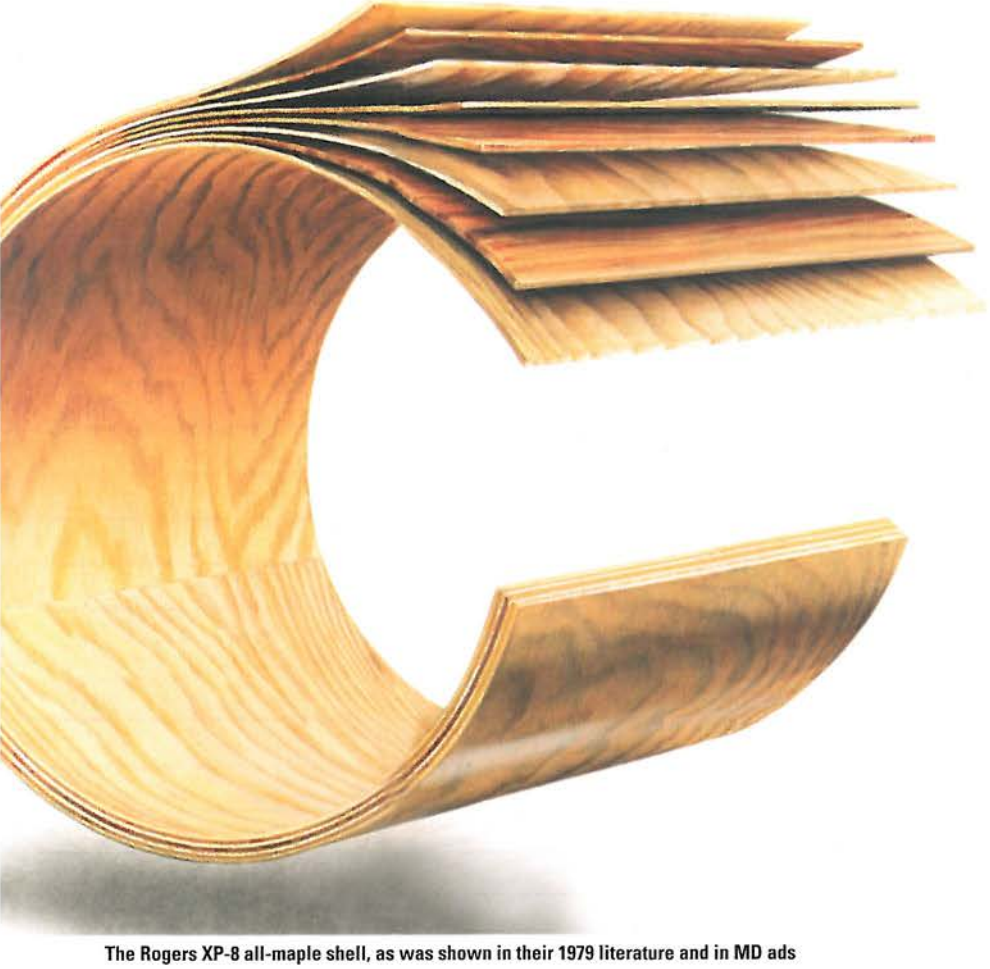
The Birth Of The All-Maple Shell

by Harry Cangany

Drums are offered in a wide variety of wood types these days. But to most drummers, an all-maple drum is the professional standard. In fact, many drummers I've spoken to simply take for granted that professional drums have *always* been made with all-maple shells. The truth is, the all-maple shell is a relatively recent development in terms of drumming history.

When I was a young player in the 1960s, most drumkits featured 3-ply shells made of African mahogany and poplar, or perhaps of maple inner and outer plies with a middle ply of another wood. There were solid-shell all-maple snare drums long before that, of course, such as the Slingerland Radio King. But the first all-maple ply shells for drumkits weren't introduced until 1979. And for that story, we have to go back a bit in history.



The Rogers XP-8 all-maple shell, as was shown in their 1979 literature and in MD ads

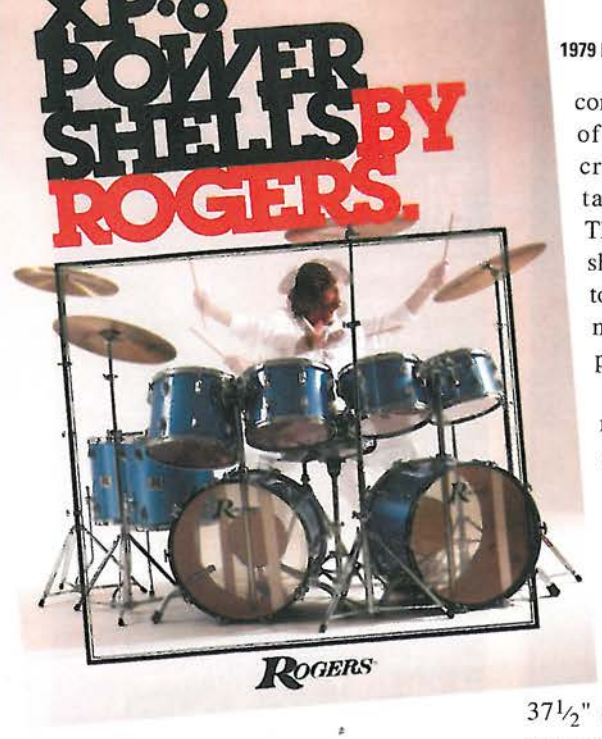
Outside Sources

During the heyday of American drum manufacturing, from the late 1920s through the boom of the mid-'60s and '70s, the biggest drum companies made their own drumshells. Others bought them from outside vendors. One of those vendors was the now-defunct Jasper Wood Products. Another was a quiet New England company known as Keller Products, which still makes drumshells today.

Keller in fact comprises a group of companies that make plastic extrusions, molded plywood, and furniture. The cylinders that become drumshells can be traced back to designs made as containers for the US army in World War II. Keller buys wood veneer from the US and other countries, and then molds that veneer into drumshells that are sold across the world. Many different woods are used, but the primary choice is North American hard rock maple.

Rogers' Revolution

Rogers Drums, based in Fullerton, California, was one of the drum manufacturers that utilized outside shell vendors. At some point in the mid-1960s they shifted from Jasper to Keller. According to Dick Steinberg, who recently retired as Keller president after



1979 Rogers flyer

twenty-five years with the company, Rogers' initial order was for combination shells of maple and birch.

But in those days the competition in the drum market was fierce, and Rogers wanted something different. So in 1979 they worked with Keller to develop a heavy, 8-ply shell with no reinforcing rings—and *all* of those plies were maple. The massive shell—dubbed the XP-8—was the beginning of thicker shells that could support the ever-growing hardware and multiple-tom setups of the day.

Naturally, when the XP-8 shell came into being, other drum companies wanted to know about it. And, just as naturally, the Rogers designers wanted to keep it a closely guarded secret. But nobody told the Rogers advertising department that. And that's how *Modern Drummer* inadvertently played a role in revealing the XP-8 design to all of Rogers' competitors.

In 1979 *MD* carried an ad with a photo (also contained in the Rogers catalog of that year) that showed a "peeled back" XP-8 shell, clearly depicting the "eight individual plies of prime select maple...." After that ad appeared, one by one virtually all of the manufacturers adopted the idea of an all-maple shell. And a lot of those shells started life in the Keller plant in New Hampshire.

Keller's Contribution

Dick Steinberg was there at the beginning of the all-maple revolution. He's proud of the role that Keller played and continues to play in the development of drums. According to Dick, the craftsmen and engineers at Keller take great pride in their work. They're continually introducing new shell designs. The goal, he says, is to develop shells that will keep US-made drums the most desired by players.

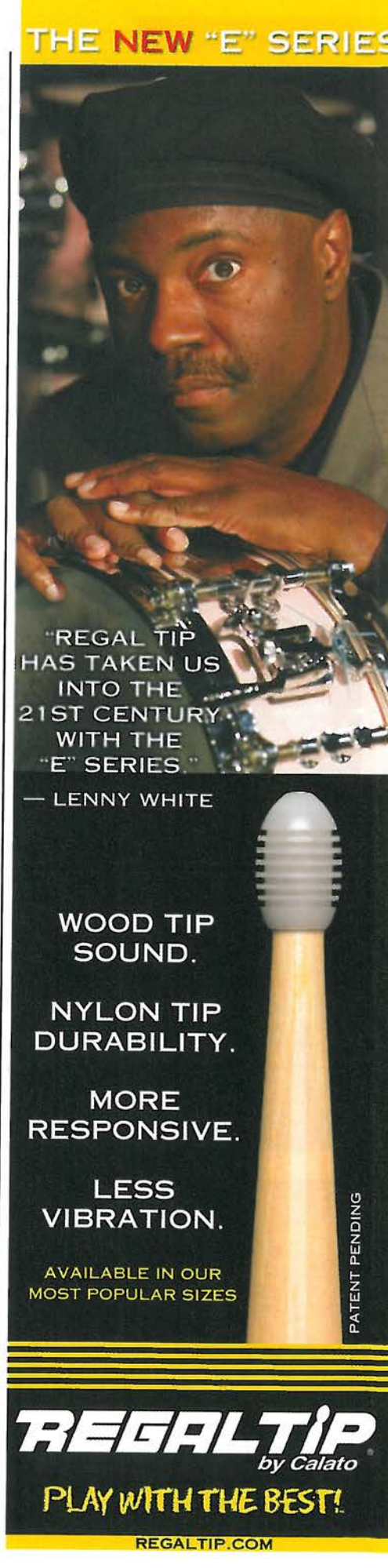
Keller's access to various technologies lets them play detective to determine what components gave vintage shells their distinctive sounds, and what can be done today to approximate those qualities. Keller makes shells from 6" to 36" in diameter, in two-inch increments, as well as 13" and 15" models. (They also make a 37½" cylinder for a clock, just in case you need one.)

I wonder how many thousands of drumshells created during Dick Steinberg's years at the helm of Keller are sitting in cases, basements, bedrooms, studios, and clubs around the world. How many musical hits were recorded on drums that started life in the hands of his craftsmen?

Dick Steinberg, former president of Keller Products

For a company that never advertised, and that kept themselves somewhat of a mystery, I'd say Keller has done alright. Perhaps in the coming years we'll see a return to 3- and 4-ply shells. That would be a "back to the future" situation for collectors and players. In fact, you might want to be on the lookout for their new African mahogany shells, which recall the glory days of vintage drums made by Ludwig and Slingerland. There are also mixed-wood shells, including birch/maple combinations.

I want to thank Dick Steinberg for his time and help with this article, and for the anecdotal Rogers material. Thanks also to the folks at Keller—past and present—for their great contributions to drum manufacturing history. Check out www.kelleratthecore.com.



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cus • tom \kəs-təm\ *adjective* (1830)
1 : made or performed according to personal order
2 : specializing in custom work or operation <a *custom* tailor>

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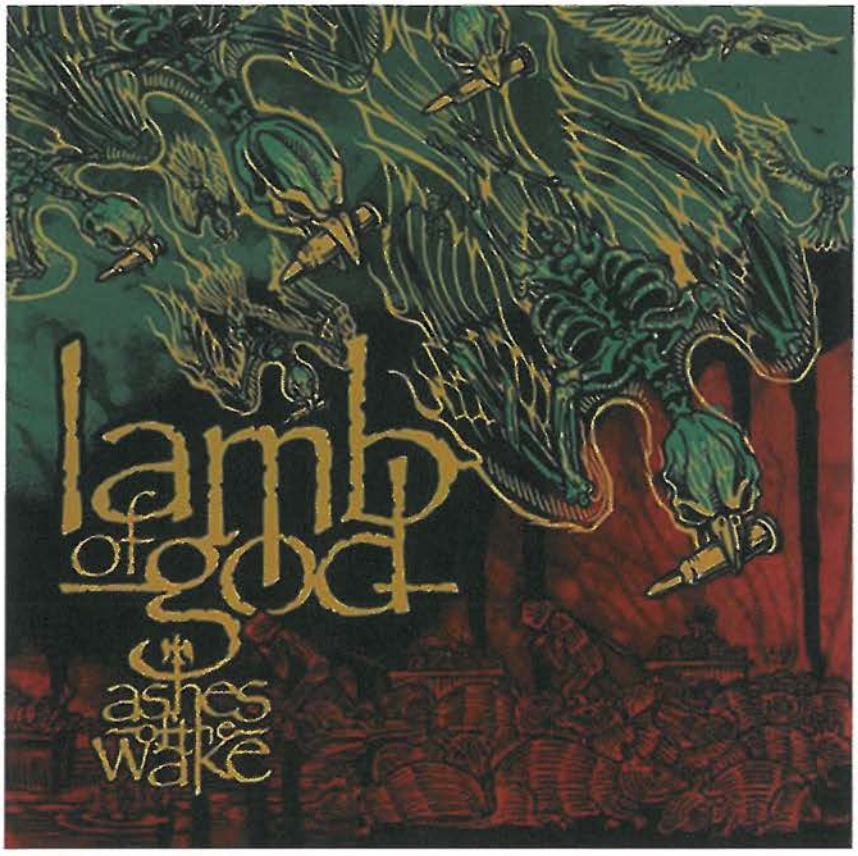


Lamb Of God Ashes Of The Wake (Epic/Prosthetic)

Just over a year has passed since Lamb Of God released *As The Palaces Burn*, but a quick Epic deal put the prolific metal quintet back in the studio for a follow-up. Thankfully, *Ashes Of The Wake* isn't some hastily assembled collection. Instead, **CHRIS ADLER** performs with a renewed perspective, most notably through his double-footed mastery. Sucker-punching kick drum interplay abounds on "The Faded Line," on which he effortlessly oscillates on and off the beat. Even the slower intro of "Omerta" and the instrumental title track (on which Adler supports four separate soloists) puts his exacting intuitions on display. Adler is simply one of the genre's finest, and *Ashes* proves it. **Waleed Rashidi**

The Melvins + Lustmord

Pigs Of The Roman Empire (Ipecac)

Right around their miraculous 20th anniversary, The Melvins invite Tool guitarist **Adam Jones** and shadowy sonic weirdo **B. Lustmord** to share in their foul fun. Seeing as Lustmord works on Hollywood scores by day, this album plays like the soundtrack to a creepy movie, complete with snorting noises (clearly pigs aren't just a metaphor), distant church bells, and the menace of a slowly approaching storm. The Melvins' skewed metal grooves weave through the minimal electronic soundscapes, and each appearance by **DALE CROVER** is a momentous occasion. He offers hypnotically repetitive reinforcement of the odd-time riffs, and pounds out mud-thick fills on his appropriately huge drums. **Michael Parillo**

Sean Jones

Eternal Journey (Mack Avenue)

Trumpeter Sean Jones plays with fire and sensitivity on his debut album, an enjoyable mix of contemporary bop-style tunes. A key component to the success of this album, however, is the endlessly creative performance of drummer **RALPH PETERSON**. From the opening track, Peterson's explosive commentary is consistently fresh. Throughout, Peterson displays a wealth of ideas and an extensive, agile vocabulary. A strong album for everyone involved. **Martin Patmos**

Significant Reissues

The Clash London Calling (Legacy)

When drummer **TOPPER HEADON** joined The Clash in 1977, his goal was to play with the band for a year and then "move on to something good." Thankfully he stuck it out. Nineteen seventy-nine's *London Calling* finds The Clash veering dramatically from its punk rock blueprint and diving headfirst into reggae, soul, ska, and rockabilly, with Headon, at the top of his game, leading the charge on classics like "Death Or Glory," "Rudie Can't Fail," and the anthemic title track. *London Calling* has recently been given the full re-release treatment: This three-disc package includes the remastered album, a disc of demo versions, and a DVD featuring a "making of" documentary and video footage of the sessions. **Jon Wurster**

Shelly Manne

Steps To The Desert:
Modern Versions Of Favorite Jewish And Israeli Songs
(Contemporary)

Always the joker, but never the clown, Shelly Manne's drumming typified wit and grace. He was especially resourceful on his own recordings, such as this 1962 date that included **Shorty Rogers**, **Teddy Edwards**, and **Victor Feldman**. Sounding like no bar mitzvah band you've ever heard, Manne and crew take obvious glee in these tracks, and the killer arrangements let them have their matzo and eat it too. **Ken Micallef**

King Crimson The 21st Century Guide, Volume One, 1969–1974 (DGM)

King Crimson leader **Robert Fripp** is responsible for some of the most emotionally charged, mysterious, and unpredictable music of the modern age. (Sadly—and forgive me, Robert—his unending commentary about copyright control and the like has become overbearingly droll, numbingly familiar, and way predictable.) *The 21st Century Guide* is a two-volume, eight-CD collection intended to replace and expand upon 1991's four-disc studio/live best-of box *Frame By Frame*. *Volume One* covers the early **MICHAEL GILES** era through the mid-'70s **BILL BRUFORD** edition of the band. Both versions were seriously mind-blowing, and the drumming was filled with style and strangeness (Giles), science and invention (Bruford). We could argue about the recent glut of Crim material, the song choices, or the appropriateness of music-industry rants in liner notes. The music speaks for itself, though, and needs to be heard by anyone *remotely* interested in the drums. **Adam Budofsky**

Senses Fail Let It Enfold You (Vagrant)

DAN TRAPP drives New Jersey emo butchers Senses Fail with incredible chops, speed, and best of all, immaculate taste. The band is bowling over with neck-snapping guitars, crybaby screams, and irresistible hooks, but Trapp treats it all like his personal palette, painting in broad strokes of rhythmic fury and logic. He's relentless with mad bell patterns, furious double bass drum accents, and blurring tom rolls, but never at the expense of the music. **Ken Micallef**

Alter Bridge One Day Remains (Wind-Up)

Alter Bridge comprises three fourths of the original Creed lineup, including drummer **SCOTT PHILLIPS**, who sounds intensely prepared for these sessions. Phillips is delightfully committed to maintaining the groove, though when the song allows, he flat-out floors it, as in his double-kick assaults for "Metalingus." Critics may only hear echoes of Metallica, Soundgarden, Led Zeppelin, and even The Eagles. Those elements are certainly present, but this CD is no less entertaining for it. **Will Romano**

Meshuggah I (Fractured Transmitter)

I is brief but thrilling. The EP's lone, twenty-one-minute piece finds **TOMAS HAAKE**'s drumming insanely effective. To create *I*, Meshuggah jammed in the studio for six weeks, and you can detect a jazzy free-form feel in the quartet's precise chops, which are grittier and sludgier than usual. The band also flaunts their prog leanings, at times recalling *Red*-era King Crimson. Schizophrenic, thunderous, and eerie, *I* proves Meshuggah are still wonderfully crazy. **Jeff Perlah**

Kimotion

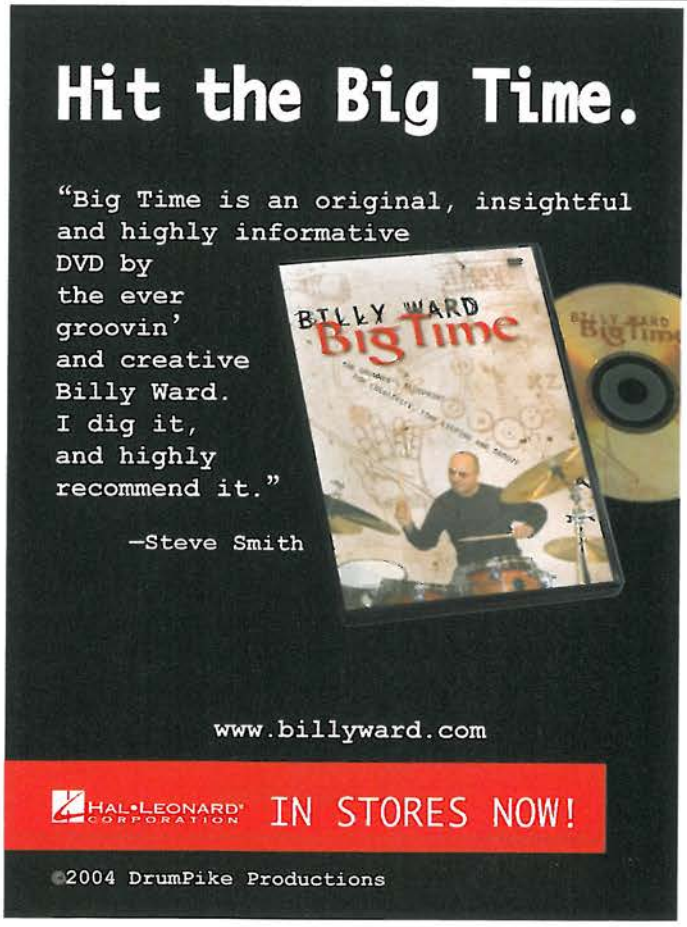
Live 2002: With My Friend Vinnie

(Little Beck Music)

Not that there's a shortage of **VINNIE COLAIUTA** tracks these days—the drummer has appeared on everything from country pop to heavy metal sessions—but *Kimotion Live 2002* is definitely an album worth picking up. Categorized as a "symphonic-big band-rock group," composer **Kimo Williams'** brainchild twenty-two-piece orchestra features unique compositions, complex arrangements, and tons of room for Vinnie to stretch his musical legs. There's even an arrangement of the tune "John's Blues," from Vinnie's 1994 self-titled release. Also appearing on the disc are percussionists **JOSE RENDON** and **SCOTT BREADMAN**, as well as drummer **KENWOOD DENNARD** on one cut. Very interesting stuff. **Michael Dawson**

Scorpions Unbreakable (Sanctuary)

German-based rock icons Scorpions have been carrying the hard rock torch for thirty-five years. Providing the ball-busting hard rock backbeat on their latest is drummer **JAMES KOTTAK**. Just like history dictates with this type of music, Kottak keeps it right where it belongs without unnecessary self-indulgence. This is the great sound that '70s-era hard rock was built upon, and no one does it better than these "Rock You Like A Hurricane" veterans. **Mike Haid**



Sparta Porcelain (Dreamworks)

The years **TONY HAJJAR** has spent behind the kit toiling with post-punk outfit At The Drive-In, and more recently in Sparta, have proven beneficial. The drummer's maturity and refinement are obvious on *Porcelain*. Hajjar is now playing with a pair of important characteristics in tow: confidence and consideration. While his approach still appears forceful and imposing, it's now counterbalanced with an air of sensitivity. **Waleed Rashidi**

Les Savy Fav Inches (French Kiss)

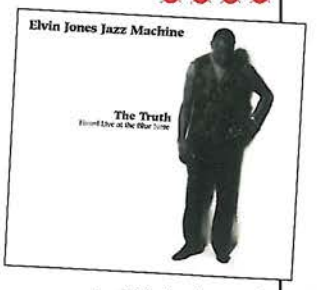
With *Inches*, a singles collection purpose-built for inclusion on a single album, Les Savy Fav have evolved into a finely honed, lyrically wicked punk music machine. The album is steeped in generous helpings of Gang Of Four and Fall-style guitar, a no-frills production, and the machine-like expertise of **HARRISON HAYNES**, a subtle yet dynamic drummer who's skilled in the art of keeping a rhythm buoyant while pinning it in its place. **Steve Goulding**

Banyan Live At Perkins' Place (Sanctuary)

An improvisational rock band that favors sheer telepathy over rehearsals, Banyan is **STEPHEN PERKINS'** solo vehicle for getting the wood out. The latest version of the group features bassist **Mike Watt**, guitarist **Nels Cline**, and trumpeter **Willie Waldman**, and here Perkins is an understated fireball throughout, dropping tribal four-to-the-floor and more esoteric/flashy grooves/percussion as needed. Though much of the record coasts in an unstructured haze until someone catches fire and turns the monotone improvs into fiery jamband stew, Perkins' dynamic drumming is a constant juggernaut of ideas and inspiration. **Ken Micallef**

Elvin Jones Jazz Machine

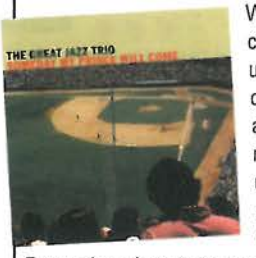
The Truth (Half Note)



This set, recorded live at the Blue Note in September, 1999, may well go down as one of the master musician's finest recordings. With tenor guru **Michael Brecker** along to bask in the glow, The Jazz Machine rips through familiar Elvin numbers like "E.J.'s Blues" and "Three Card Molly" and plays it sweet on "Body And Soul." The septet (two saxes, trombone, trumpet, piano, and bass) is in exceptional form, and Elvin is...well...Elvin. Brecker helps crystallize the music; Elvin's fire, command of his instrument, passion, and endless ingenuity are awe inspiring. **Ken Micallef**

The Great Jazz Trio

Someday My Prince Will Come (Village/Columbia Records)



What more can be said about **ELVIN JONES**? Of course there's the legendary power, passion, and unpredictability. But what about the drummer's other, subtler side? Beyond all the rolling triplets and off-beat accents, Elvin was also one of the most mature and expressive musicians to ever pick up sticks. For proof, check out his final studio recording, *The Great Jazz Trio*. Still playing with youthful exuberance, the drummer shines brightly. From the signature quasi-mambo groove of "Caravan" to a number of unique solos, Elvin expresses a deep yet subtle side that reaffirms his legacy in music history. **Michael Dawson**

WE PAID THIS GUY
A LOT TO BE IN THIS AD.

Congratulations to **Mike Perdue,** winner of the 2004 Pro-Mark/Modern Drummer Magazine Scholarship Award. Mike is a senior at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA and won $1,500 cash towards his tuition. He also received $1,000 in Pro-Mark merchandise.

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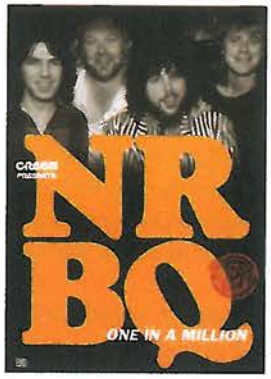
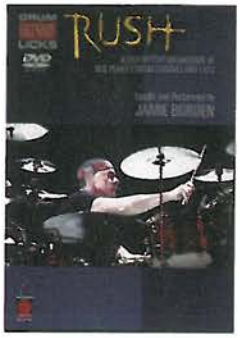


I've always insisted, You *gotta* see them live. Watching NRBQ, it gradually becomes clear: These guys sound unique not only because they think differently but also because they *physically* play differently. Case in point is this charged, albeit brief (forty-minute) 1989 concert from Montreal. Driving his eclectic rocker mates, **TOM ARDOLINO** flails his rubber forearms, lending rootsy grease to the rollicking pulse. It's truly intuitive grooving. Few drummers would find the key to corralling this eccentric bunch. Maybe that's why Ardolino's quirky, commanding kit work has led the charge for three decades. Good Boys Gone Wild.

Jeff Potter

Rush: Legendary Licks featuring Jamie Borden (Cherry Lane)

level: intermediate to advanced, $24

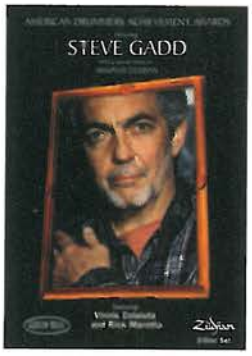


Jamie Borden clearly has an understanding of Neil Peart's fills and exciting drum parts. But this DVD could have benefited from a great deal more attention and budget. The overall sound, which includes original Rush tracks, is fair, but with the exception of a few multiple-angle moments, most of the performances look like they were first takes. We can't completely fault Borden's effort on this project; the playing is consistently good. But only three years' worth of Peart's thirty-year career (represented by eight songs) is explored. Also, though he demonstrates some classic Neil licks and then breaks them down into digestible parts, Borden offers sparse explanation. Written charts or examples would go far to help in this regard. This is an interesting subject that deserves more educational power.

Sean Enright

American Drummers Achievement Awards Honoring Steve Gadd (Hudson Music)

level: all, $49.95 (2 discs)



Renowned record producer Phil Ramone sums up this much-deserved, six-plus-hour tribute by stating, "You've got to study Steve Gadd for a long, long time to realize how brilliant he is." This lengthy program, from the Zildjian-sponsored 2003 American Drummers Achievement Awards, allows the viewer to do just that. A biographical documentary on Steve's amazing career and a heartfelt video tribute to the late Armand Zildjian are informative and inspiring. Guest speakers include bassist **Anthony Jackson** and **Louie Bellson**. Musical highlights include performances by **Rick Marotta** and **Vinnie Colaiuta** driving an all-star band. The show culminates in a dynamic performance by Gadd with **James Taylor**. High-profile interviews (**Eric Clapton, Chick Corea,** etc.), rehearsal footage, and a lengthy discussion with Gadd make this a valuable piece of drumming history, well worth the investment.

Mike Haid

Godsmack Changes (Coming Home Studios/SRS Labs)

level: all, $19.98

Road life ain't easy—particularly if you're slated as the supporting act on Metallica's *St. Anger* tour, working overtime to appease one of metal's most demanding audiences. However, Boston's Godsmack accepted the gig and had their successful *Faceless* tour superbly documented on this DVD. Though there's nearly an hour of show footage, *Changes* also splices in plenty of backstage and interview clips. For drummers, the DVD's highlight is drummer **SHANNON LARKIN**'s dueling eight-minute solo with vocalist (and impressive drummer) **Sully Erna**. Launching with Erna's bongo and conga solos, the pair eventually trade fours, exchanging fills, rudiments, and stick visuals with deft precision. While the solo is a superb segment, it might not be enough to appease the casual drummer. But for the Godsmack fan, *Changes* is a must-have.

Waleed Rashidi

BOOKS

The New Method For Afro-Cuban Drumming

by Jimmy Branly (Hudson Music)

level: intermediate to advanced, $19.95 (with CD)

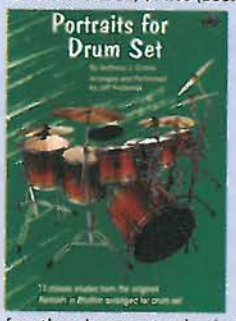
This is a challenging and reasonably priced package for those interested in learning advanced modern drumset concepts in Afro-Cuban music. Using son, rumba, and 6/8 clave, Branly builds from the basic clave patterns and gradually structures complex polyrhythmic ideas. Several of these examples also incorporate the left-foot cowbell technique. You'd better have your reading chops together for many of these lengthy and complicated examples. Every example from this well-designed book is heard on the accompanying CD. Branly's play-along solos are inspiring, as he exposes a larger world of already intricate Afro-Cuban rhythmic ideas.

Mike Haid

Portraits For Drum Set

by Anthony J. Cirone and Jeff Redlawsk (Warner Bros.)

level: advanced, $14.95 (book & CD)

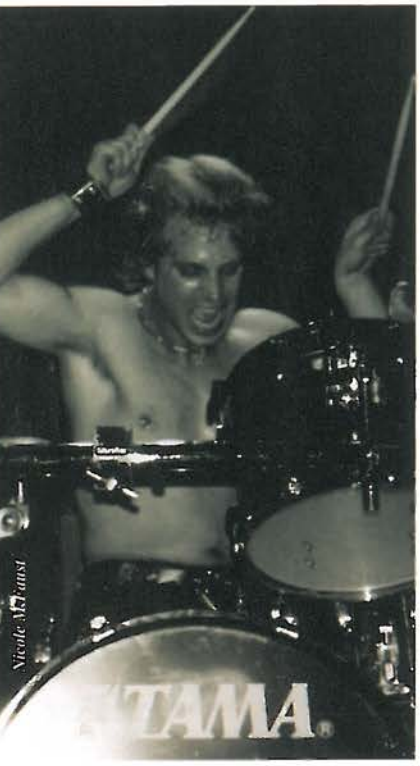


Finally, an etude book that blends the worlds of classical percussion and contemporary drumset playing. Co-author Jeff Redlawsk has arranged twelve etudes from Anthony Cirone's classic *Portraits In Rhythm* for the drumset, placing each solo in a distinct style and feel. Second-line, odd-metered funk, jazz, linear shuffle, and several different Latin styles are all explored. Plus, other etudes are in a more soloistic, multiple percussion setting. It's challenging material that addresses a range of musical skills, perfectly suited for end-of-the-semester juries or auditions. Whether used in conjunction with the original or as a stand-alone study, this book is *highly* recommended.

Michael Dawson

MD Radio
To hear many of the artists reviewed in this month's *Critique*, be sure to tune in to www.moderndrummer.com.

Trent Anderson



Nicole M. Faust

Chicago-based drummer Trent Anderson's promo package ends with a simple but telling statement: "Trent is available for tour and travel any time." It's a pretty succinct way of describing Trent's career, along with his fundamental drumming goal. He is, and wants to be, a journeyman drummer, recording and touring with as many successful acts as he can. And he's been doing just that since 1992.

Trent's demo CD reveals him to be a meat-and-potatoes rock drummer, with a powerful backbeat and a dash of punk sensibilities honed during a six-year stint with the band Muchacha. That group opened for acts like Saliva, Local H, Chevelle, Joan Jett, Staind, Everclear, and The Muffs.

Recently, Trent has employed his skills on recordings by Epic Records artists Matador Down, as well as Rocket Girl, featuring Gina Crosley, formerly of Veruca Salt and Courtney Love's band. He has been touring with both of those acts, and has also been filling in for Soulfly drummer Joe Nunez in Joe's side project Stripping The Pistol.

Trent's dedication to his career as a drummer has earned him the attention of many record producers and band managers. It has also earned him endorsements from Sabian cymbals and Vater drumsticks.

Cole Marcus

Only a select few drummers can boast major appearances on TV shows, endorsements with well-known percussion manufacturers, and the admiration of more experienced peers. Even fewer drummers can lay claim to all of the above at the age of five.

Cole Marcus has been impressing audiences and industry alike since he was two. In the ensuing three years, his precocious drumming skills have earned him appearances on NBC's *America's Most Talented Kid* (he won), *The Today Show, Inside Edition, Access Hollywood, Extra, The Sharon Osbourne Show,* and *The Wayne Brady Show.*

Cole has also performed at Youth Outreach concerts across the country, in front of audiences of 10,000 or more. At a recent performance on the same bill as Switchfoot, the members of that band asked Cole for *his* autograph. The young drummer is also being considered to play Buddy Rich as a child in an upcoming biopic on Buddy's life, and he recently auditioned for the role of drummer-boy Chris in a new version of *The Partridge Family.* All of this exposure has earned Cole endorsements with Mapex drums, Zildjian cymbals, and Vic Firth drumsticks.

Not bad for a kid who's still looking forward to entering the first grade!

John Metcalf

"Bongo John" Metcalf takes his nickname from the fact that in addition to being a drummer, he is also a percussionist...and a keyboardist, a poet, a producer, a recording engineer, a singer, a songwriter, and a synthesist who scores underground films. He operates his own studio (Bongo Studios, natch) in Morrisville, North Carolina, where he does double duty as engineer and on-call studio drummer for many regional composers and artists.

John started playing drums at an early age in Oklahoma, eventually acquiring a drumset in his teens. He also studied piano, and later added bass and percussion to his arsenal. In his twenties he developed his percussive skills with a band called The New Tribe—a hippie jam band that played at the Washington Monument in the mid 1990s, in front of 100,000 people at a N.O.W. rally that also featured Toad The Wet Sprocket and Joan Jett.

Having had his fifteen minutes of fame, John began "woodshedding" again, playing and recording on CDs with local bands. In 1991 he published a book called *Exploring Basic Stickings And Polyrhythms.* As a solo artist, he has completed several CDs, including a comedy album called *Tallyho Aloha* and a symphonic work called *Oppenheimer In Dust Trees* (www.bongojohn.net). A DVD called *The Bongo John Experience* is to be released shortly, and a tribute CD to Buddy Rich, Neil Peart, and Elvin Jones is also in the works. An advance track from that project showcases John's outstanding technical and musical talents on a forty-minute solo in tribute to Elvin.

If you'd like to appear in *On The Move*, send us a CD, cassette, DVD, or videotape of your best work (preferably both solo and with a band) on three or four songs, along with a brief bio sketch and a high-quality color or black & white close-up photo. (Polaroids are not acceptable. Photos will not be paid for or credited.) The bio sketch should include your full name and age, along with your playing style(s), influences, current playing situation (band, recording project, freelance artist, etc.), how often and where you are playing, and what your goals are (recording artist, session player, local career player, etc.). Include any special items of interest pertaining to what you do and how you do it, and a list of the equipment you use regularly. Send your material to On The Move, Modern Drummer Publications, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Material **cannot** be returned, so please **do not** send original tapes or photos.

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PASIC 2004 In Music City

Where can you hang for four jam-packed days with today's most innovative drumset artists, bigwig manufacturers, virtuosic classical marimbists, and master drummers from Ghana? Try the Percussive Arts Society International Convention. This past November 10–13, PASIC returned to Nashville, Tennessee for the fourth time since 1989.

The entire opening day was dedicated to avant-garde percussion music, with an array of interesting performers. The day culminated with a performance by red fish blue fish, featuring percussionist **Steven Schick**.

Drumset activity began on Thursday, with **Ricky Sebastian** in the 9 A.M. slot, followed by an enthusiastic clinic by *SNL*'s veteran drummer **Shawn Pelton**. After lunch, **Brady Blade** energized the crowd with some deep funk and New Orleans grooves, and **Jojo Mayer** astounded everyone with his jaw-dropping, electronica-infused monster chops. The day concluded with a fine performance by **Nathaniel Townsley**.

Friday kicked off with a master class on big band drumming by **Steve Fidyk**, which was followed by an amazing display of multi-layered independence and musical maturity from **Antonio Sanchez**. At noon, **John Hazilla** gave the first of three brush-intensive clinics. (Jazz legends **Jake Hanna** and **Ed Thigpen** conducted the second and third clinics on Saturday.) A 2:00 P.M. master class by **Fred Dinkins** was followed by a solid performance from studio and touring artist **Russ Miller**. After Norwegian drummer **Erik Smith**'s clinic, the legendary percussion ensemble **Nexus** took the stage with international drumset artist **Fritz Hauser**. Friday's festivities were capped off with a set of high-energy salsa music from **Lalo Davila & OMP**.

Saturday started on the good foot as **Derico Watson** wowed the audience with his ridiculous single kick chops and impeccable feel. At noon, **Pat Petrillo** and **Marshall Maley** involved the audience in an interactive lesson on "Feeling The Groove." Then **Gary Chaffee** demonstrated some of the concepts from his legendary *Patterns* series, and **Sonny Emory** threw down some of the fastest single strokes on the planet. At 5:00 P.M., **Morgan Rose** made his PASIC debut, pummeling his way through some high-octane tracks. And for the evening concert, **Manu Katché** and his band performed a beautiful set of the drummer's original compositions. Closing the weekend was the group **Super Action Heroes** featuring drummer **Johnny Rabb**.

Notable classical percussionists appearing throughout the convention included **Alan Abel**, **Tim Adams**, **Michael Burritt**, **Anthony Cirone**, **Tom Freer**, and **Stanley Leonard**. In addition, various ethnic percussionists gave enlightening clinics, including North African percussionist **Najib Bahri**, West African drumset specialist **Royal Hartigan**, Latin percussionists **Rolando Morales-Matos**, **Efrain Toro**, and **Ralph Irizarry**, Middle Eastern tambourine expert **Layne Redmond**, doumbek authority **Dror Sinai**, mrudangam master **Umayalpuram K. Sivaraman**, and the multi-talented **Vinx**.

Special congratulations to **Ed Shaughnessy** and **Gordon Peters** for being the 2004 inductees into the PAS Hall Of Fame. PASIC heads to Columbus, Ohio for 2005. For more info visit www.pas.org.

Michael Dawson

Manu Katché
Rick Malkin

Antonio Sanchez
Rick Malkin

Derico Watson
Rick Malkin

Shawn Pelton
Rick Malkin

ProgPower USA V Festival

Tropical storm Ivan battered North Georgia the night before the fifth annual ProgPower USA international progressive metal festival, held this past September 17–18 at Earthlink Live in Atlanta, Georgia. But the power of prog metal was in full force, and the show went on without a hitch.

Canada's Into Eternity kicked things off. Drummer **Adam Sagan**'s heavy blast beats and quick single-stroke rolls opened the festival with a new generation of prog metal attitude. Germany's Dreamscape followed, with drummer **Bernhard Huber** providing a smooth, technical approach to complicated arrangements.

Peter Morén laid down the heavy drum grooves for the straight-ahead metal/rock of Sweden's Tad Morose. Florida's Kamelot then offered some traditional prog metal. **Casey Grillo**'s drum solo displayed versatile technique and effortless chops.

Day one closed with a two-part offering. **Chris Kinder** perfectly filled the drum chair for a melodic, '70s-style project called Jon Oliva's Pain, combining appropriately designed grooves and musical chops. After a quick stage change, the crowd was treated to a rare reunion of Oliva's popular '80s metal band Savatage, featuring the bombastic drumming of **Steve "Dr. Killdrums" Wacholz**.

Day two began with France's Adagio. Drummer **Eric Lebailly**'s fluent style blended fusion drumming into a melodic prog format. Next up was Celtic prog metal from Scandinavia's Wuthering Heights. **Morten Gade Sorensen** displayed some of the smoothest double bass chops of the festival.

Dieter Bernert provided a metronomic backbeat for Germany's Brainstorm, with an over-the-shoulder swing that called for an immediate head change after the forceful set. Another crowd-pleaser was the emotional and eclectic prog metal of Sweden's Pain Of Salvation. Drummer **Johan Langell** performed well-orchestrated parts within the complex arrangements.

The festival climaxed with '80s-style power metal from Germany's Edguy. Drummer **Felix Bohnke** held the pop metal groove with a simple yet aggressive style and a visually exciting drum solo.

All drummers shared a Pacific Drums And Percussion white onyx CX double bass setup equipped with a complete set of Sabian Paragon cymbals, a variety of Evans heads, and Shure microphones. For more photos from ProgPower V, check out www.moderndrummer.com. For info on future ProgPower festivals, visit www.progpowerusa.com.

Mike Haid

Morten Gade Sorensen of Wuthering Heights

Steve Wacholz of Savatage

Brainstorm's Dieter Bernert

Dreamscape's Bernhard Huber

DrumBeat Festival 2004

TigerMix.com, Inc. and Zims Cymbal Cleaner presented DrumBeat Festival 2004 this past October 16, at the Lehigh Valley Charter High School For The Performing Arts in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The event opened with original Christian rock provided by **Greg DiCarlo** (creator of Zims) and his band Savior Soul. Producers Tiger Bill Meligari and Greg DiCarlo then presented a plaque to *MD* senior editor Rick Van Horn in memory of *MD* founder Ron Spagnardi.

Kevin Soffera (formerly of Seether) demonstrated his deep-groove drumming style, and offered tips on what it takes to make it in the music business. World's Fastest Drummer (WFD) champ **Art Verdi** took the stage to discuss the Drumometer and to dispel some common misconceptions concerning extreme sport drumming. **Jotan Afanador** then demonstrated his "shaking vibrations" technique. He also made an unsuccessful attempt to break his current WFD single-stroke record. Author/educator/Webmaster **Tiger Bill Meligari** explained the mechanics behind his tension-free system of drumming. He followed with an extended solo that crossed all styles.

Dom Famularo closed the show, entrancing the crowd with his humorous stories, energetic showmanship, and drum chops. Dom called all the artists on stage for a finale that brought the audience to its feet. Sponsors for the event included Axis Percussion, Madwaves, Paiste, Pintech, Pro-Mark, Remo, Sabian, Vater, Vic Firth, Warner Bros., WFD, Yamaha, and *Modern Drummer*.

Standing, from left: Dom Famularo, Kevin Soffera, and Tiger Bill Meligari. Seated: Greg DiCarlo.

Zildjian Artist Hang In New York City

Zildjian hosted their third annual New York Artist Session at Studio Instrument Rentals (SIR) in New York City this past September 9. A casual gathering of Zildjian artists and staff, the event provided a chance to preview the manufacturer's newest instruments. It was also an opportunity to remember the late Elvin Jones, since September 9 would have marked his seventy-seventh birthday.

Artists in attendance included Alex Alexander, Bobby Allende, Tony Beard, Al Bouchard, Rocky Bryant, Otis Brown III, Daryl Burgee, Sterling Campbell, Teddy Campbell, Michael Cartellone, Joe Corsello, Sylvia Cuenca, Tony DeAugustine, Clint DeGanon, Marko Djordjevic, Charley Drayton, Billy Drummond, Joe Franco, Robbie Gonzalez, Freddie Gruber, Omar Hakim, Gerald Heyward, Ali Jackson, Victor Jones, Ray Marchica, Jerry Marotta, Richie Morales, Jean Nadeau, Shawn Pelton, Clarence Penn, Ben Perowski, Pat Petrillo, Marc Quiñones, John Riley, Joel Rosenblatt, Tony Royster Jr., Charles Ruggiero, Antonio Sanchez, Pete "La Roca" Sims, Bill Stewart, Ed Toth, Todd Turkisher, Matt Wilson, Steven Wolf, and Doug Yowell.

Zildjian personnel on hand included company director Rab Zildjian, director of artist relations & event marketing worldwide John DeChristopher, product manager Gregg Stein, and R&D specialist Paul Francis. Also at the event were representatives from *Modern Drummer* and *Drum Business* magazines, Drummer's Collective, and Hudson Music.

MD/Mapex Contest Winners

Modern Drummer Publications is pleased to announce the winners in the Modern Drummer/Mapex giveaway. The contest, which appeared in the July, August, and September 2004 issues of *MD*, featured six prizes valued at over $15,000, and attracted over 15,000 entries.

The grand prize, an Orion Burlwood kit valued at over $5,000, went to **Michael Kirkpatrick** of Wenatchee, Washington. First prize, an Orion Birdseye maple kit, was won by **N. Nelson** of South Pasadena, California. Second prize, a Saturn Pro set, went to **Kody Raycraft** of North Bay, Ontario, Canada. **Andrew Stenvall** of Clifton, New Jersey won the third prize, an all-maple Pro M kit. Fourth prize, an all-maple M-Series kit, went to **Shannon Huffman** of Hawaiian Gardens, California. Fifth prize, a VX Plasma Lacquer kit, was won by **Art Thomas** of Bowie, Maryland. Congratulations to the winners from Mapex and *Modern Drummer*.

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"Thank you so much for making my dream a reality. Rock 'n Roll Fantasy Camp blew me away!" ~ ***Pam Romito, camper***

"I just returned from the greatest week of my life! The roster of legendary artists that coached, schooled and entertained us was incredible." ~ ***Barry Rosenbaum, camper***

"Everyone involved was awesome. I will never forget this for the rest of my life." ~ ***Fred Dawson, camper***

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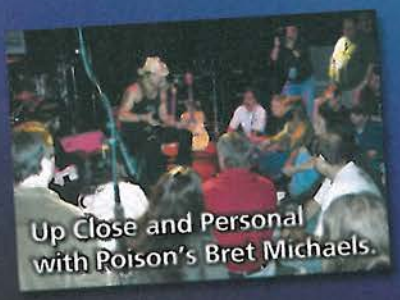

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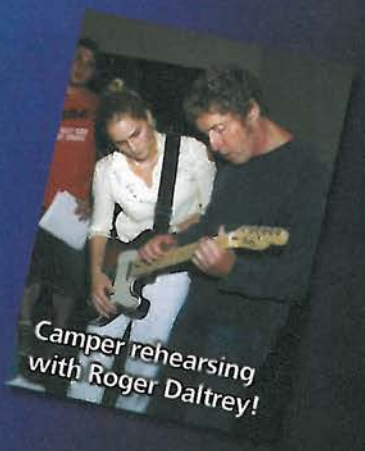

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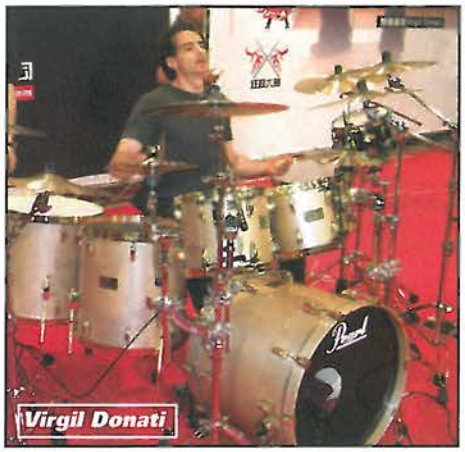

This past August 21 and 22, Pearl's Chinese distributor, Central Music Company, played host to the largest drumming event in China's history. It was attended by over 800 drummers, many of whom are members of China's forty Pearl Clubs—drum schools that promote hands-on drumming education through local Pearl dealers. During the event, a panel of China's top drummers presented photos and commentary of their experience at the recent Pearl Summer School, which is an annual event in Japan.

On hand from Pearl Corporation in the US were product specialists Gene Okamoto and Raymond Massey. Gene presented a Pearl factory-tour program that highlighted the company's shell-forming technology. Raymond then took the stage to showcase Pearl's flagship Masterworks line. The day ended with bands playing well into the night.

The second day began with the finals of the Fastest Drummer In China contest, followed by a solo contest that was won by ten-year-old Chen Hui. The show ended with an exciting clinic by **Virgil Donati**.

Paiste Signature Dark Energy Summit

Paiste America held a summit at SIR Studios in New York City this past October 14 to feature the company's New Signature Dark Energy cymbal line. In attendance were music retailers and Paiste artists from the surrounding area. The event began with a presentation by national accounts manager Ed Clift and artist relations director Rich Mangicaro, who explained the history of the line and also performed a few pieces to demonstrate the musicality of the cymbals.

Also performing were two of Paiste's noted artists. **Nathaniel Townsley** (of Joe Zawinul Band fame) performed with Ron Long on bass and Shedrick Mitchell on B-3 organ. After their extremely musical performance, **Tobias Ralph** followed with a blazing example of the drum 'n' bass style. Both drummers played the Dark Energy cymbals, demonstrating the versatility of the line. Nathaniel and Tobias closed the evening with a powerful double-drumming jam.

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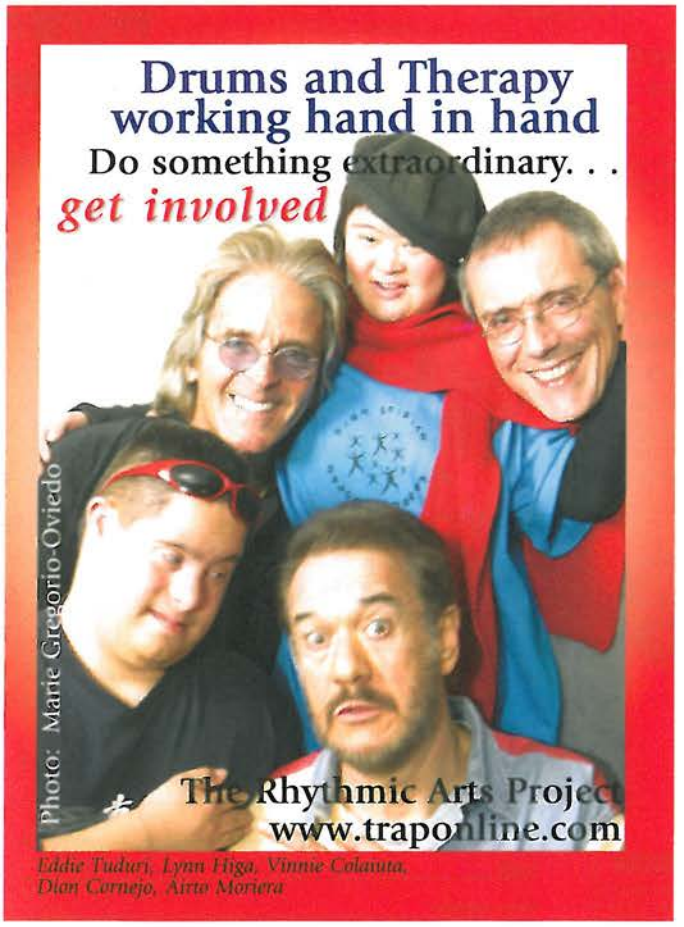
D'Addario, parent company of **Evans Drumheads**, is looking for "The Greatest Band We've Never Heard." In this extensive promotional campaign, one band will be chosen through a series of qualifying steps including online voting, D'Addario review, and artist/celebrity judges. The winner will receive a spot in D'Addario commercials/ads, an appearance on Fuse TV, a gear prize package, and more.

Bands and musicians should visit **www.guitar.com** to upload the mp3s and encourage friends and supporters to vote for their song. A contest landing page will include information on the prize package, uploading links and instructions, charts (songs with the most votes), a discussion board, and related links. The contest will begin in January and run through April.



Indy Quickies

Yamaha's Subkick received an Exceptional Quality award from audio engineering magazine *EQ*, in the publication's September 2004 issue. *EQ* praised the Subkick for its "fat sound, ease of use, and cool look." The Subkick is a sub-frequency capture device that employs the microphonic properties of a standard 6½" loudspeaker as an alternative or supplement to a traditional microphone for use with kick drums and floor toms. (714) 522-9011, www.yamaha.com.

The third annual **Woodstick** event will take place this coming February 21 at the Tacoma Dome in Tacoma, Washington. This event, which is sponsored by Tacoma Rotary Club #8 and Donn Bennett Drum Studios, has twice broken the Guinness World Record for the number of drummers playing simultaneously. Registration is $15, and net proceeds will help support local school music programs. Numerous celebrity drummers will be in attendance, and prizes will be awarded for participants who raise the most money. (253) 722-7526, www.Bennettdrums.com, or www.Rotary8.org.

Roland has upgraded the Boss Web site, **www.BossUS.com**, to feature improved functionality, a sleek new design, state-of-the-art multimedia demos, and a new dealer locator. Search and support functions provide information with the click of a mouse button. TurboStarts, FAQs, and software information are updated around the clock.

Roland has also launched a new education site called the **Roland Music Education Community**. Located at **www.RolandUS.com/musiceducation**, the site features sections including Getting Started, School Spotlights, Curriculums, Resources, and Financing Options for music technology educators nationwide.

The seventh annual **Fun With Drums Clinic** will be held this coming March 4, at Muskegon High School auditorium in Muskegon, Michigan. Featured artists will include Grammy award–winning drummer **Julio Figueroa**, along with educator/clinician **Tim Fronceck**, rock drummer **Mytch Hull**, the **GVSU Steel Drum Band**, the **Nelson Elementary Schools Percussion Group**, and others. For more information email Bill DeMarse at demarse@chartermi.net.

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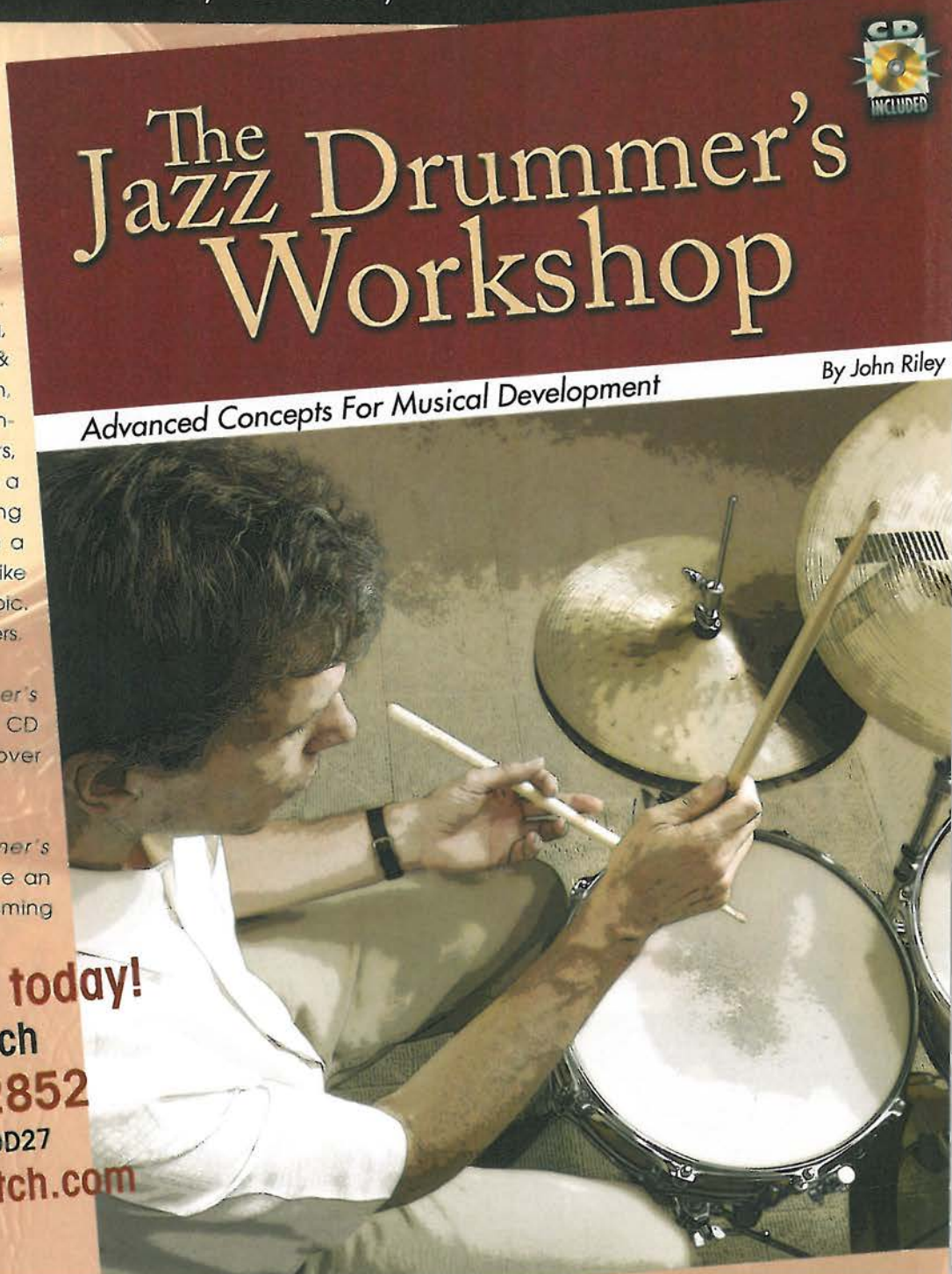

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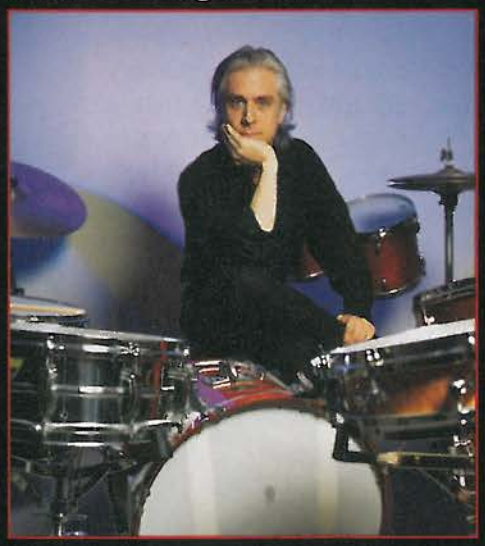

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The Ambadextro Kit

Michael Barton has been a working drummer for the better part of thirty years, playing every kind of gig. He's backed major artists, and he's also played in bars for nobody but the staff. (Sound familiar?)

A while ago, Michael changed from playing primarily traditional grip to using German/American matched grip. In doing so, he began to think of how to play evenly, giving both hands—and both sides of his body—"equal time." This led him to create his Ambadextro kit.

The kit is centered on a 4x14 Trick Kodiak T6 snare drum, with a cable remote hi-hat positioned directly in front of it. To Michael's right is a 16x22 Trick bass drum, along with 9x10, 10x12, and 11x13 Yamaha Maple Custom suspended toms and a 16x16 Maple Custom floor tom. To his left are 9x10, 10x12, and 12x14 Trick suspended toms and a 14x16 Trick floor tom. A 22" Paiste 2002 ride (on the left) and a 20" Paiste Signature Dry heavy ride (on the right) are augmented by a collection of Zildjian crashes, splashes, and effects cymbals. Michael also uses a custom-made ashiko, about which he says, "It has unbelievable low end. I can play it with sticks or my hands, so it's a great little drum to have hanging around the kit.

"The toms of each size are tuned to the same pitches," Michael continues. "That way I can keep my hands on their respective sides of the kit while playing up and down the toms. And, of course, I can play each side individually with *both* hands. It's like having two kits. With this setup, I can easily do things that would be challenging on a regular kit. It's a very fun and easy way to play."

PHOTO REQUIREMENTS

1. Photos must be high-quality and in color. 35mm slides are preferred; color prints will be considered; Polaroids not accepted. 2. You may send more than one view of the kit. 3. Only show drums, no people. 4. Shoot drums against a neutral background. Avoid "busy" backgrounds. 5. Clearly highlight special attributes of your kit. Send photo(s) to: Kit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Photos cannot be returned.

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